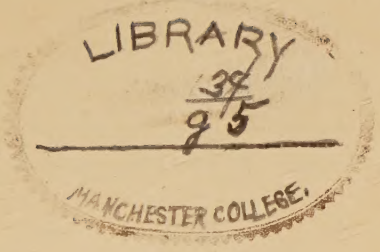
Quiet Talks about The Crowned Christ

S. D. Gordon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QUIET TALKS
ABOUT
The Crowned Christ

BY

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"Quiet Talks on Power," "Quiet Talks on Prayer,"
"Quiet Talks about Our Lord's Return"

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PREFACE

Crowning the Christ is an intensely practical thing, whether taken in the *personal* sense or the *world* sense. He has been crowned in the upper world. With wondrous patience and graciousness He pleads for the personal crowning in our lives. Some day—no one knows just when—He will begin to *act* as the crowned Christ *in all the affairs of our earth.*

The initiative of all action to-day on the earth is in man's hands. Some day the initiative of *governing* action on the earth will be in the hands of the crowned Christ, even while the personal initiative of each man's life will still be in his own hands.

God is intensely practical. Jesus was never concerned about speculation nor mere discussion; He was too intent on helping people. The Bible is wholly a practical book. It is concerned only with helping us. It does not tell us all the truth there is; we shall be constantly learning more in the future life. But it does tell us all we need to know now. And its purpose in telling us what it does is wholly practical,—to urge us to right choice, and to lives that square with the choice. This is the purpose that decided just what truth should be told in the Book.

There is one book of the sixty-six devoted wholly to this subject of the crowned Christ,—"The Revelation of John." Every one of these books touches Him at some angle, and finds its deepest meaning in what He was to do and did do, and yields up its secrets only under the touch of His hand. But this book, the closing and climax of all, the knot in the end of the inspired thread, this deals wholly with the action of the crowned Christ.

No book of the sixty-six has seemed so much like a riddle and set so many a-guessing. And without doubt much of its meaning will be clear only as events work themselves out. Events will prove the only expositor of much. But it is with the deep conviction that this is wholly *a practical book,* written wholly from a practical point of view, and concerned wholly with our practical daily lives, that I have ventured to take it up in this series of simple, wholly practical, Quiet Talks. And it is only this side of its teachings that will be dealt with here. The Book is a street leading into the true overcoming life the Master would woo us to.

It is only after many years' study of this Book of the Revelation, and a special study the past three years and a little more, that I have ventured to put these talks together. And now they are sent out with the earnest humble prayer that others may find some little practical help in prayerfully reading, as I have found much in prayerfully studying, under the Master's gracious faithful touch.

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I.—THE CHRIST CROWNED, THE FACT

"When God sought a King for His people of old,
He went to the fields to find him;
A shepherd was he, with his crook and his lute
And a following flock behind him.

"O love of the sheep, O joy of the lute,
And the sling and the stone for battle;
A shepherd was King, the giant was naught,
And the enemy driven like cattle.

"When God looked to tell of His good will to men,
And the Shepherd-King's son whom He gave them;
To shepherds, made meek a-caring for sheep,
He told of a Christ sent to save them.

"O love of the sheep, O watch in the night,
And the glory, the message, the choir;
'Twas shepherds who saw their King in the straw,
And returned with their hearts all on fire.

"When Christ thought to tell of His love to the world
He said to the throng before him,
'The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep—'
And away to the cross they bore Him.

"O love of the sheep, O blood sweat of prayer,
O man on the cross, God-forsaken;
A shepherd has gone to defend all alone
The sheepfold by death overtaken.

"When God sought a King for His people, for aye,
He went to the grave to find him;
And a shepherd came back, Death dead in His grasp,
And a following flock behind Him.

"O love of the sheep, O life from the dead,
O strength of the faint and the fearing;
A shepherd is King, and His Kingdom will come.
And the day of His coming is nearing." [1]

[1] Joseph Addison Richards.

THE CHRIST CROWNED, THE FACT

His Coronation Gift.

Christ is crowned. Not in any vague far-fetched meaning, but in the plain common-sense meaning of the word, He is *crowned*.

For crowned means put in the place of highest power, with full right to exercise that power at will. And when the crucified Jesus went up that Olivet day, before the astonished eyes of the disciples, into the sightless blue, on the cloud, He was received in the upper world by the Father. And He was lifted up into the place of highest honour and greatest power. He sat down at the right hand of the Father.[1]

He had said it would be so. Breathing the air thick with bitter hate on the night of His trial, He had quietly said to the Jewish rulers that even so it would be, bringing at once about His person the bursting of the storm of hate.[2] Now His unfaltering trust in His Father has its sweet reward.

The Holy Spirit poured out on Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, was the gift of the

[1] Mark xvi. 19.

[2] Matthew xxvi. 64.

crowned Christ. The rushing sound as of a mighty wind that filled all the house, the tongues of flame plainly seen, the bold talking to the crowds of foreign Jews of God's mighty power, the faithful witnessing about the crucified Jesus in the city that hounded Him to death, the convinced crowds openly declaring at the peril of their lives their belief in the despised Jesus, the strangely rare unselfishness even in money matters, and the winsome graciousness of spirit that marked, not only the inner circle, but these greatly increased crowds,—all this said one thing in clear unanswerable tones of unmistakable power, *Christ is crowned*.[1] For the sending down of the Holy Spirit was the act of the crowned Christ.

And every touch of the Holy Spirit's presence within trusting hearts,—the sweet peace, the quiet assurance, the longing for purity, the drawing away to prayer, the hunger for God's Word, the intense desire to have others saved, the passion to please this wondrous God of ours,—all these simple marks of the Holy Spirit's presence in our hearts, all tell us, and each tells us, in unmistakable tones, that Christ is crowned. For this wondrous Spirit within is the gift of the crowned Christ.

When Jesus went up from the earth, holding as His sure captive the captivity of suffering and death to which He had with such great strength yielded, He received gifts, coronation gifts. The Father gave Him all. He gave Him

[1] Acts ii. 33; iii. 13-16; v. 31-32; vii. 55, 56.

the disposal and control of all. This was the crowning.

And in His great out-reaching love Christ received these gifts *on behalf of men,* His blood brothers. And at once He gave to men, to His trusting disciples, the all-inclusive gift, the Holy Spirit, His coronation gift.[1] So God came anew to dwell with men as originally planned.

This blessed Presence within tells me, by His mere presence, that Christ is crowned.

The writers of the New Testament make a chorus of sweet music on this chord, ringing out in clear tones the full notes of delight and joy. Luke's simple narrative sounds the note four times. Paul swells it out with a joyous fulness that grows in volume and intensity as his narrowing prison walls shut out more and more the lower lights, and centres his upward gaze upon Jesus, "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named," with "all things in subjection under His feet."[2] John's special companion and working partner, Peter, makes this note blend with and dominate the minor chord of suffering for Christ 's sake.[3]

The Christian Hebrew who wrote so eloquently to his fellow-countrymen of the immense superiority of Jesus and so modestly withheld his own name, strikes this note five times with strong,

[1] Psalm lxviii. 18; Ephesians iv. 8; Acts ii. 33.

[2] Romans viii. 34; Ephesians i. 20-22; Philippians ii. 9-11; Colossians iii. 1.

[3] I Peter iii. 22.

clear touch.[1] He quotes that Eighth Psalm, which so wonderfully gives God's own ideal for man's mastery over all creation. And then he tells us that in Jesus the ideal will yet be fully realized. And that while the whole plan has not yet fully worked out as it will, yet *even now* we see the Jesus who tasted death for every one, crowned with glory and honour as part of the plan which He carried out in suffering the extreme suffering of death.

And our Lord Jesus Himself, talking out of the glory to the man who was His bosom companion on earth, reserves as His last tender plea to us to live the overcoming life this—"he that overcometh I will give him to sit down with me in my throne as I also overcame and *sat down with my Father on His throne.*"[2]

And so we find out just what this word crowned means. Jesus was received in the upper world, exalted, glorified, made to sit down at the Father's right hand, put far above all rule and authority, with a name greater in the sweep of its power than any other, and with all things put in absolute subjection under His feet. This is the simple, direct meaning of the sentence—Christ is crowned.

What a contrast the two faces of that glory cloud saw! The face looking down, and the face looking up! The one—the downward face—looked upon a cross, a Man hanging there with a mocking crown of thorns without and a break-

[1] Hebrews i. 3; ii. 8-9; viii. 1; x. 12; xii. 2.
[2] Revelation iii. 21.

ing heart within, scowling priests, jeering crowds, deserting disciples, sneering soldiers, weeping women, heart-broken friends, a horror of darkness, a cave-tomb under imperial seal, and blackest night settling down over all.

The other—the upward face—looked upon a great burst of the upper glory, the countless angels singing swelling songs of worship, the wondrous winged cherubim, the redeemed hosts from Eden days on reverently bowing and exultantly singing, the exquisitely soft-green-rainbow-circled throne, the Father's face, once hidden, but to be hidden now never again, the *shared* seat on the Father's throne,—what a contrast!

Here crucified—there crowned. Crucified on earth, one of the smaller globes of the universe. On the throne of the whole universe of globes—crowned! From the lowest depth to the one extreme height. From hate's worst to Love's best. From love poured out for men to love enthroned for those same men; love triumphant each time, on cross and on throne. What a contrast! What a coronation! What a welcome home to a throne!

The Music of a Name.

It is most intensely interesting to recall that, of course, this is just what the very word Christ means,—the Crowned One. We sometimes get so used to a word that it is easy to forget its real meaning. The word Christ has been used so generally for so many centuries as a *name* that

we forget that originally it was a title, and not a name.

And it still is a title, though used chiefly as a name. Some day the title-meaning will overlap the name-meaning. We may never cease thinking of it as a name, but there is a time coming when events will make the title-meaning so big as to clear over-shadow our thought and use of it as a name.

It helps to recall the distinctive meaning of the words we use for Him who walked amongst, and was one of us. Jesus is His *name*. It belongs to the *man*. It belongs peculiarly to the thirty-three years and a bit more that He was here, even though not exclusively used in that way in the Book.

There's a rare threefold sweetness of meaning in that five-lettered name. There is the meaning of the old word lying within the name, before it became a name, victory, victor, saviour-victor, Jehovah-victor. There is the swing and rhythm and murmur of music, glad joyous music, in its very beginnings as a common word.

Then it has come to stand wholly for a *personality*, the rarely gentle, winsome, strong personality of the Man of Bethlehem and Nazareth, and of those crowded service-days. And every memory of His personality sweetens and enriches the music in the old word.

And then the deepest significance, the richest rhythm, the sweetest melody, come from the meaning His experiences, His life, pressed into

it. The sympathy, the suffering, the wilderness, the Cross, the Resurrection, all the experiences He went through, these give to this victory-word, Jesus, a meaning unknown before. They put the name Jesus actually above every name in the experiences of tense conflict and sweeping victory it stands for. This threefold chording makes music never to be broken nor forgotten.

"There is no name so sweet on earth,
No name so sweet in heaven,
The name before His wondrous birth,
To Christ the Saviour given."

Lord is a title, of course. It was used of one who was a proprietor, an owner, or a master. It was commonly used as a title of honour for one in superior position, as a leader or teacher. In speaking of Jesus it is coupled with the title Christ as an interchangeable word,[1] as well as an additional title. But peculiarly it is the *personal title* given Jesus by one who takes Him as his own personal Master,[2] while it still retains its broader meaning.

But *Christ* is peculiarly *the official title* of Jesus. There is only one Christ. Lord is used of men. It is used of both the Father and the Holy Spirit, as well as of Jesus. But the name Christ is used of only one person, and can mean only that one. There could be only one Christ.

The word or its equivalent was used occasionally in the Old Testament in a narrowed sense

[1] Acts ii. 36 [2] Romans x. 9.

for the King of Israel, who is reverently spoken of as "the Lord's anointed," that is, God's Messiah or Christ.[1]

But the one common thought of it among the Hebrew people, growing ever intenser as the Old Testament period merges into the time of the New, was that there was one coming, *the* Messiah, *the* Christ, God's chosen, the one anointed and empowered, to be their Deliverer. The one question that sets all hearts a-flutter about the rugged John of the deserts was this: "Is he *the* Christ?"[2] In their thought there was only one to whom the title belonged.

And even so it is. Christ is the official title of *the One* Chosen and anointed by God to be ruler over His Hebrew people, and over all the race, and the earth, and the universe,—God's King, to reign until all have been brought into full allegiance to the great loving Father.[3] The Christ is the Crowned One, God's Crowned One. The very word Christ tells that Christ is crowned.

Our Great Kinsman.

There is an intensely interesting question that crowds its way in here, and it proves an immensely practical question, too. *Why* was Christ crowned? We can say at once that this was His

[1] I Samuel xvi. 6; xxiv. 6, 10; II Samuel i. 14-16; xix. 21, and elsewhere; Psalm xviii. 50, and frequently in Psalms.

[2] John i. 20, 25; Luke iii. 15.

[3] Philippians ii. 10; I Corinthians xv. 24-26.

due. He was given that which belonged to Him in good right. He was reinstated in His former position, with all the power and glory that were His before His errand to the earth.[1]

Then too this was His vindication after the shameful treatment of earth. Before the eyes of all the upper world, both loyal and disloyal eyes, this man whom earth hounded so shamelessly is vindicated; He is set right by the Father.[2]

But there is yet more than this. It is a more of a sort that concerns *us* very closely, and it sets one's heart a-beating a bit faster. This crowning was part of a plan, a plan of which our earth is the centre. It was the second great part of a plan of which the suffering and dying were the first great part. Both were for the sake of us men and our earth-home, and the lower creation.

This is the thing being emphasized in the second great paragraph of the Hebrews.[3] Man was made the under-master of the earth and of the lower creation, but lost, weakly surrendered, his place of mastery. The new Man came to recover for man what had been lost and to realize this original lost plan.

And so He became our brother, sharer of our flesh and blood, tempted like as we, perfected in His human character by the experiences He went through, then tasted to the bitter dregs the death that belongs to our sin. And then follow-

[1] John xvii. 5; i. 1-3; Colossians i. 15-17.

[2] Matthew xxvi. 64; Acts ii. 22-24, 32-36; Philippians ii. 9-11; Hebrews ii. 9.

[3] Hebrews ii. 5-18.

ing that, He was crowned with glory and honour. And so He rises to the place of mastery over all that belongs to perfect man. So He brings all creation into the glad subjection which is its natural happy state. It is for earth's sake, for the race's sake, and for the sake of our faithful companions and servants, the whole lower creation, that Christ has been crowned.

We think more about the personal meaning to ourselves of His having died and risen again. We need to remember, too, this broader meaning. The dying and rising secures our salvation personally. The crowning and the reigning will work out the redemption of all nature and of the lower creation,[1] and this in turn will mean much for men living on the earth in the Kingdom time, and for the race as a race.

This leads at once to another question that presses in. What is the *domain* of the crowned Christ? If we take the crowning in the common meaning of that word, it means that there is some domain that Christ rules over. What is it that He is crowned over?

And the answer is so sweeping as to seem far-away and dreamy to us who are living on this sin-hurt earth. He is the crowned Ruler of the whole created universe and all intelligent beings in it. He has been placed over absolutely every "rule and authority and power and dominion, and not only in this present age but in the com-

[1] Romans vii. 19-22; Jeremiah ix. 10; xii. 4, 11; xxiii. 10; Genesis iii. 17-19; Acts iii. 21.

ing age."[1] There is simply no limit in extent to His domain. Everything has been placed in subjection to Him and is now subject to His word, and His alone.

There is a striking passage in Philippians that fits in here.[2] In speaking of the exaltation of Jesus Christ, Paul is careful to explain particularly that every knee would bow, *in the heavens,* and, *on the earth,* and *under* the earth or in the *world below.*

This threefold division is very striking. The heaven things are understood at once, and things of the earth sphere. But there is a third world to be taken into account, that strange uncanny world of evil spirit beings in rebellion against God's authority. It is spoken of repeatedly as principalities and powers, indicating numbers and organization, dignity, and power.[3] All of this is included in what has been placed under Christ's authority.[4]

Is Christ Reigning Now?

But there is still another question that has been impatiently pushing underneath for some time. And it also is an intensely practical one. Does this mean that Christ is actually ruling now over this domain of His? How about the affairs on

[1] Ephesians i. 20-22; Hebrews ii. 6-8.
[2] Philippians ii. 9-11.
[3] Ephesians vi. 12; Colossians ii. 15.
[4] Colossians ii. 10; Ephesians iii. 10; iv. 8-10; I Corinthians xv. 24.

the earth? Are all things here subject to Him? Is this the way He would have things go? And some of us think the evil spirits seem pretty free in their movements. This present order of things that we are living in the thick of, is this the reign of the crowned Christ? And some of us feel the stress of things so much that we can scarce keep patient for a thoughtful poised answer to our questions.

There are those, and good earnest folk they are, too, who tell us that Christ has come, and is constantly coming, more and more, into our common life. The higher ideals that are crowding for expression, the more spiritual conceptions of man and his brotherly relations, the constant striving toward better civilization, the bettering of the condition of the poor and less fortunate, the increased recognition of men's rights in the complex industrial world, the increasing effort to correct evils by legislation, the great moral reforms that are sweeping aside the awful liquor curse, and loosening women's bonds, and safeguarding young womanhood and children, the newer aggressiveness in the missionary propaganda and in much of the activity of the Church, even the attempt to humanize and civilize the warfare that in itself is stupidly savage and utterly inhuman,—is not all this a coming of Christ and of the Christ-spirit into our common life? many ask.

And there is only one answer to such questions, a strong emphatic "yes." It surely is the Christ-spirit that moves in all of this. This is a

coming of Christ; and a blessed coming, too. There was nothing of this sort before the Christ-spirit began to sweeten the world's life. And there is none of it to-day except in those parts of the world where the Christ-spirit influences life.

But—there's a "but"—it proves a blessed but; this is only a crumb or two falling from a loaded table. And he who judges Christ by these crumbs only, wholesome and toothsome as they are, will have a very skimpy conception of Christ.

All of this sort of thing that has come has come very slowly. It has had to fight through and in, every step of the way that it has come. Its coming has been opposed stubbornly, maliciously, viciously every inch of the road, as only those know who are in the thick of the struggle for these reforms, panting for breath sometimes.

It is as though a few whiffs of wholesome life-giving air have breathed through the cracks and crevices of the breastworks and fortifications of evil in which all our common life seems entrenched. But the fortifications are still there. If the sweet, wholesome breathing in through cracks and crannies has been so blest, what would it be if the forces of evil were clean removed from the scene, and the Christ-spirit became the whole atmosphere breathed fully and freely without restraint, with no bad draughts, and no counter currents to guard and fight against?

It would seem like a strange sort of a kingdom if the present is even a gradual coming in of

the Kingdom. We would seem to be having a new, strange sort of a Christ if the present is a sample of His sort of reigning. For it may well be thoughtfully doubted if ever there was such a condition of feverish unrest in all parts of the world as to-day.

It is most difficult to put your finger on a single spot of the world-map that is not being torn and uptorn by unrest in one shape or another. Either actual war, or constant studious preparation for war, actually never ceases. And it is difficult to say which is the worse of the two. The actual war reveals more terribly to our eyes and ears the awful cost in treasure and in precious human blood spilled without stint. The never-ceasing preparation for war seems actually to cost more. In the immense treasure involved, and in blood too, given out, not on an occasional battlefield, but in the continual battle of daily life to meet the terrible drain of taxation, it costs immensely more. There is less of the tragic for the news headings, but not a whit less, rather much more, in the slow suffering, the pinched lives, and the awful temptations to barter character for bread.

Then there is the continual seething unrest in the industrial world; the protests sometimes so strange and startling against social and political conditions; the feverish greed for gold, and land, and position; the intense pace of all our modern life; the abandonment of home and home ideals; the terrific attack against our young womanhood. The political pot which gathers into itself all

these things, never quits boiling or boiling over, in some part of the world, now here, now there. And it seems like the greatest achievement of diplomacy when here and there it can be kept from boiling clean over, or at least made to boil over less.

It would seem indeed like a queer sort of kingdom if this is a sample. Some of us would have less heart in repeating one petition of the old daily prayer. And Christ would seem to have quite changed His spirit and character if this is a result of His coming.

The Greatness of Patience.

And the great simple truth is this, the truth that in the strange mix-up of life we easily lose sight of is this: *Christ has not yet taken possession of all of His domain;* a part of it still remains to be possessed. "We see *not yet* all things subjected to Him."[1] We are living in the "not-yet" interval between the crowning and the actual reigning. We are living on the "not-yet" possessed part of His domain.

And the question that comes hot and quick from our lips, even though with an attempt at subdued reverence, is this: "Why does He not take possession, and untangle the snarl, and right the wrongs, and bring in the true rational order of things?" And all the long waiting, the soreness of hearts over the part that touches one's own life most closely, the shortness of breath in

[1] Hebrews ii. 8.

the tensity of the struggle, underscore that word "why?"

And the answer to the impatient question reveals all afresh the greatness of the love of our Christ. His greatness is shown most in His *patience*. But patience is one of the things we men on this old earth don't know. It's one of the unknown quantities to us. It can be known only by knowing God. For patience is love at its best. Patience is God at His best. His is the patience that sees all, and feels all with the tender heart that broke once under the load, and yet waits, steadily waits, and then waits just a bit longer.

In this He runs the risk of being misunderstood. Men in their stupidity constantly mistake strong patience for weakness or indifference or lack of a gripping purpose. And God is misunderstood in this, even by His trusting children. But, even so, the object to be gained is so great, and so near Christ's heart that He waits, strongly waits with a patience beyond our comprehension; waits just a bit longer, always just a bit longer.

There are two parts to the answer. Jesus the Christ is giving man the fullest opportunity. He never interferes with man's right of free choice. Man is free to do as he chooses. Every possible means is used to influence him to choose right, but the choice itself is always left to the man. The present is man's opportunity. The initiative of action on the earth is altogether in man's hand. All of God's power is at man's disposal; but man

must *reach out* and *take*. This long stretched out waiting time is for man's sake, that he may have fullest opportunity. The longsuffering of God would woo men.[1]

When at length opportunity comes to its end it will be only because things have gotten into such desperate shape, into such an awful fix, that at length *for man's sake* Christ will step into the direct action of the earth once again. He will take the leadership of earth into His own hands, even while still leaving each man free in his individual choice. This is the first part of the answer. The waiting is that man may have fullest opportunity.

Then Christ has a great hunger for *willing* hearts. No words are strong enough to tell His longing for a free, glad, joyous surrender to His mastery. He could so easily end the present conflict, but He waits that men may bring to Him the allegiance of their lives, given of their own glad, gracious, voluntary accord. He was a volunteer Saviour. He longs for that love that is the bubbling out of a free, full heart.

The best love is only given freely without any compulsion of any sort, save only love's sweet compelling. He wants what He gives—the best. And so He waits, patiently waits just a bit longer. This is the second bit of the answer. The long delay spells out the hunger as well as the patience of God's heart. The divine Husbandman is pa-

[1] II Peter iii. 8-9; Romans ii. 4; ix. 22; Revelation ii. 21; I Peter iii. 20; II Peter iii. 15; Exodus xxxiv. 6-7.

tiently waiting, and sending warm sun and soft rains and fragrant dews while waiting.[1]

"The Husbandman waiteth—
The *Husbandman?* Why?
For the heart of one servant
Who hears not His cry.

"The Husbandman waiteth—
He *waiteth?* What for?
For the heart of one servant
To love Him yet more.

"The Husbandman waiteth—
Long patience hath He—
But He waiteth in hunger—
Oh! Is it for thee?[2]

Taking with Your Life.

But—ah! listen, there's a wonderful "but" to put in here. *But,* while waiting *He puts all His limitless power at our disposal.* If that simple sentence could be put into letters of living flame, its tremendous meaning might burn into our hearts. When Paul piled up phrase on phrase in his eager attempt to have his Asiatic friends in and around Ephesus take in the limitless power of the ascended Christ, he added the significant words, "to the Church."[3] All that power is for the use, and at the disposal, of the Church.

The Church was meant to be a unit in spirit in loyalty to her absent Lord, wholly under the dominating touch of the Holy Spirit, not only

[1] James v. 7. [2] F. M. N.
[3] Ephesians i. 20-22.

in her official actions, but in the lives of the individual members. If she were so, no human imagination could take in the startling, revolutionary power, softly, subtly, but with resistless sweep, flowing down from the crowned Christ, among grateful men.

Not being such a unit it is not possible that that power shall be as great in manifestation as was planned and meant. For no individual nor group can ever take the place in action of the whole unified body of believers, acting as a channel for the power of the crowned Christ. That power shall be realized on the earth only when the Church is so unified, and at work, under the reigning Christ, from the new headquarters up in the heavens.

But meanwhile all of that power is *at the disposal of any disciple of Christ*—the humblest—who will simply live in full-faced touch with Christ, and who will *take* of that power as the need comes, and as the sovereign Holy Spirit leads.

It is of this, this *personal* taking, that Paul is speaking when he piles up that intense sentence: "able to do *exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think* according to *the power that worketh in us.*" [1] The great bother in Paul's day and ever since, and now, is to get people to *take*. The power is fairly a-tremble in the air at our very finger-tips. And we go limping, crutching along both bodily and mentally and in our spiritual leanness.

[1] Ephesians iii. 20.

Those tremendous words of Jesus, "because I go unto the Father," with the whole passage in which they occur,[1] must be read in *the light shining from the throne*. Only so can they be understood. But then, so read, they begin to grip us, and grip us hard, as we see what He really meant and means.

He who has the warm, child-like touch of heart with Jesus, that the word "believeth" stands for, shall—as the Holy Spirit has full control—do the same works as Jesus did, same in kind and in degree, and then shall do even greater than Jesus ever did. *Because* it is now the glorified crowned Christ who is doing them through some child of His, simple-hearted enough to let Him have full control.

And the means through which He will do them is simple, child-like, trusting, humble prayer. The man using the power is on his knees. The lower down he gets the more and more freely the power flows down and out among men.

As one learns to keep in touch—learns it slowly, stumblingly, with many a stupid fall, and many a tremble and quiver—as he learns to keep in simple touch with the crowned Christ he will find *all* the power of that Christ coming with a soft surging throb of life wherever needed. *We may have all we can take.* But *the taking must be with one's very life.* No mere earnest repeating of a creed in Church service will avail here. The repeating must be, syllable by syllable, with feet and will, with hands and life, in the

[1] John xiv. 12-14.

daily tread where each step is stubbornly contested.

This is the bit of truth for the waiting time. This is the song to be singing in this present "not-yet" interval. And the song will help cut down the length of that "not-yet," until the friction of our lived faith shall wear off the "not" and wipe out the "yet," and we shall find the crowned Christ a reigning Christ.

For some day this patient waiting crowned Man will rise up from His seat at the Father's right hand. He will step directly into the action of earth once again. Man will have had his fullest opportunity lengthened out to the last notch of his possible use of it. Then we shall see the crowned Christ quietly stepping in, taking matters wholly into His own hands, and acting in all the affairs of earth as the Crowned One. Then He shall reign from sea to sea, and from the Euphrates out to where the ends of the earth become a common line on the other side. The Kingdom will have come, for the King will be reigning.

The night will be gone. The day has come. The shadows flee. He has come, whose presence puts the new day at dawn, with the East all aflame, and the fragrant dew glistening gladly on every tender green blade. This time of expectancy is over;[1] the time of making real has *come*. Then comes the restoration of the old original love plan to earth and beast and man.[2]

[1] Hebrews x. 13. [2] Acts iii. 21.

"Thou art coming, O my Saviour!
Thou art coming, O my King!
In thy glory all-transcendent;
In thy beauty all resplendent;
Well may we rejoice and sing!
Coming! In the opening east,
Herald brightness slowly swells;
Coming, O my glorious Priest,
Hear we not thy golden bells?

"Thou art coming, Thou art coming!
We shall meet Thee on Thy way,
We shall see Thee, we shall know Thee,
We shall bless Thee, we shall show Thee
All our hearts could never say!
What an anthem that will be,
Ringing out our love to Thee;
Pouring out our rapture sweet
At Thine own all-glorious feet!

"Thou art coming! Rays of glory,
Through the veil Thy death has rent,
Touch the mountain and the river
With a golden glowing quiver,
Thrill of light and music blent.
Earth is brightened when this gleam
Falls on flower, rock, and stream;
Life is brightened when this ray
Falls upon its darkest day.

"Not a cloud and not a shadow,
Not a mist and not a tear,
Not a sin and not a sorrow,
Not a dim and veiled to-morrow,
For that sunrise grand and clear!
Jesus, Saviour, once with Thee,
Nothing else seems worth a thought!
Oh, how marvellous will be
All the bliss Thy pain hath bought!

"Thou art coming! At Thy table,
We are witnesses of this,
While remembering hearts Thou meetest,
In communion clearest, sweetest,
Earnest of our coming bliss.
Showing not Thy death alone,
And Thy love exceeding great,
But Thy coming and Thy throne,
All for which we long and wait.

"Thou art coming! We are waiting
With a hope that cannot fail;
Asking not the day or hour,
Resting on Thy word of power
Anchored safe within the veil,
Time appointed may be long,
But the vision must be sure;
Certainty shall make us strong,
Joyful patience can endure!

"O the joy to see Thee reigning,
Thee, my own beloved Lord!
Every tongue Thy name confessing,
Worship, honor, glory, blessing,
Brought to Thee with glad accord!
Thee, my Master and my Friend,
Vindicated and enthroned!
Unto earth's remotest end
Glorified, adored, and owned![1]

Working by the Light of the Throne.

But we are still in the "not-yet" interval. We see not yet all things subject to Him. This is still the waiting time. It is the pleading time for Him. He pleads for the *personal crowning* of Himself in our lives, that He may reign there

[1] Frances Ridley Havergal.

and He alone. This is our great opportunity. We shall never see its like again, nor anywhere else than on this earth.

In the reigning time that's coming this peculiar opportunity of crowning Christ while He still is absent and despised, this will be gone. In the upper world they have no such opportunity. There is no opposition there. Now and here is the rarest opportunity to put this great waiting patient Man on the throne of heart and life, with possessions and ambitions and plans all in subjection under His feet.

Every woman knows the name of Brussels lace. The old capital of the low countries of Europe has long been famous for its lace. It is of great interest to note the conditions under which it is sometimes made. They are conditions studiously prepared after long experience. In one of the famous lace factories in Brussels there are a number of small rooms devoted to the making of some of the most delicate patterns.

Each room is just large enough for a single worker, and is quite dark except for one narrow window. The worker sits so that the stream of light falls from above directly upon the threads, while he himself sits in the darkness. The darkness aids the workman's eyes to see better, and to work more skilfully in the narrow line of clear light centred on the delicate task. He weaves in the upper light intensified by the surrounding gloom, and does exquisite work.

There is a clear line of light *from a throne* shining down into the darkness in which we sit

and move. It shines from the face of a crowned Man. In the light of that light we can see clearly to do a difficult bit of crowning work,—to crown the Christ in our lives and to keep Him crowned.

As our eyes follow that line of upper light we may catch glimpses of His wondrous Face up there in the glory. So we shall be steadied and cheered in the darkness as we stick to our glad crowning work. And so we shall move forward on the calendar the day when that thin line of light seen now only by watching eyes shall become a burst of glory light seen by all eyes.

And this is the thing the crowned Christ is asking of us during this waiting time, this "not-yet" interval. He is counting on each of us being faithful to Him, our absent Lord, in this.

"He is counting on you.
He has need of your life
In the thick of the strife:
For that weak one may fall
If you fail at His call.
He is counting on you,
If you fail Him—
What then?

"He is counting on you.
On your silver and gold,
On that treasure you hold;
On that treasure still kept,
Though the doubt o'er you swept
'Is this gold not *all* mine?
(Lord, I knew it was *Thine.*')
He is counting on you,
If you fail Him—
What then?

"He is counting on you.
On a love that will share
In His burden of prayer,
For the souls He has bought
With His life-blood; and sought
Through His sorrow and pain
To win 'Home' yet again.
He is counting on you,
If you fail Him—
What then?

"He is counting on you.
On life, money, and prayer;
And 'the day shall declare'
If you let Him have *all*
In response to His call;
Or if He in that day
To your sorrow must say,
'I had counted on you,
But you failed me'—
What then?

"He is counting on you.
Oh! the wonder and grace,
To look Christ in the face
And not be ashamed;
For you gave what He claimed,
And you laid down your *all*
For His sake—at His call.
He had counted on you,
And you failed not.
What then?"[1]

Ah! Please God, by His grace, we shall not fail in *the ruling purpose* of our lives. We *may*

[1] Mrs. Bessie Porter Head.

crown Him Lord of all. We *can.* He asks it. We surely *will.*

"With all my powers Him I greet,
All subject to His call;
And bowing low at His pierced feet
Now crown him Lord of all."

II.—THE CROWN BOOK

"All hail the power of Jesus' Name!
Let angels prostrate fall:
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all.

"O that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song
And crown Him Lord of all!

"With all my powers Him I greet,
All subject to His call;
And bowing low at His pierced feet,
Now crown Him Lord of all.

"I hail the power of Jesus' Name,
Before Him gladly fall,
Bring Him my own heart's diadem
And crown Him Lord of all!"

THE CROWN BOOK

The Crowning Book.

There is *a crown book* in this old Book of God,—the Revelation of John. It is *the* crown book, the only one. It is the crown book of the sixty-six in two senses. It is the capping climax of the whole revelation of God's Word. It gathers up into itself in a peculiar way the dominant characteristics of both the Hebrew Old and the Greek New Testaments.

And it is the book of the Crown. The King is in action. He Himself gives the message of the book to John. He is seen stepping forward to take possession of His realm. Then He takes possession. He dispossesses the pretender. He reigns over the earth. The Revelation of John is the Crown book.

This is the peculiarity of the Revelation in comparison with all the other books. Only here is Christ seen exercising His crown rights. From end to end of the Old Testament pages, His coming is looked forward to, with an eager longing that grows in intensity as the national failure grows ever worse.

In the Gospels He comes, but not as He was expected. He is heralded as King, and claims to be King. He has all the graciousness of a

King in ministering to the needs of the people, and all the power of a King in His personal touch. But He is rejected by the nation, and goes to the Cross, yet still as a King,—a humiliated, crucified King.

In the Acts He is the risen, glorified King seated at the Father's right hand in glory, and at work through His followers among men on the earth. But it is always in the midst of sharp, bitter opposition. In the Epistles He is seen crowned at the Father's right hand, guiding and teaching His followers who are still suffering persecution.

But in the Revelation of John all this is changed. There's a sharp, decided, advance step. Here He is not only crowned, but stepping directly and decisively into the action of the earth in the full exercise of His crowned rights and power. It is peculiarly the book of the Crown, the royal book, the enthroned Christ exercising fully and freely at will His crown rights.

Jesus' Bosom Friend.

The book was written by John the disciple and apostle. This is our same old friend John, whom we met first that ever-memorable afternoon, down by the Jordan River road, when he was introduced to Jesus by the John of the deserts, and had his first long, quiet talk with Him.[1] The friendship began that day, grew steadily, and never flagged. It was one of the few friendships

[1] John i. 35-42.

that Jesus had that never knew any lapse nor eclipse.

He became, in an outstanding sense, the bosom friend of Jesus. Probably it was not because of any special gentleness or amiability on John's part, though he may have had something of these traits. It was more likely because of the deep, intelligent sympathy between the two, a sympathy not only of personality, but deeper and stronger because of a mental and spirit likeness growing up between them. It would seem likely that John developed a mental grasp, a spirit insight, a student thoughtfulness, a steadiness of temperament, and with these, a growing understanding of much—at the least—much of Jesus' spirit and ideals and vision.

It may quite be that all this came slowly, and grew up out of the constant contact with Jesus, and out of the warm personal love between the two men; quite likely. Who could live so close to Jesus as he and not bear the marks on mind and spirit? The fire that burned so fiercely in early years [1] grew into a steady, unflickering flame under the influence of that personal friendship.

It seems not unlikely that John belonged to a good family, and had his home in Jerusalem. He was clearly on terms of easy intimacy at the palace of the High Priest,[2] which in itself would suggest his social standing in the city. It was to this man that Jesus, on the Cross, committed the care of His mother. And John accepted the

[1] Luke ix. 54. [2] John xviii. 15-16.

trust as a tender token of friendship, and took Mary at once to his own home. And as Mary remained in Jerusalem at least some time, and John clearly for a long time, the home was likely there.

John was one of the chief leaders in Jerusalem during the Pentecost days, and after. Peter was the chief spokesman, but John was always close by his side. The friendship between the two seems to have been close and of long standing. They were sent together by the Master to arrange for the supper that memorable betrayal night,[1] and they are seen together in the activities in Jerusalem for many years.[2]

It would seem that in later years John left Jerusalem, and made his home for the remainder of his life in Ephesus. Doubtless he was led, after the years of leadership in the mother Church, to leave the great Jew centre, and devote his strength to missionary service in the outside Gentile world.

Ephesus was the chief city of the province of Asia, and the natural centre of the population and life of the province. John probably worked out from Ephesus, preaching throughout the whole district; teaching, advising, praying with, and visiting the groups of little Churches scattered throughout the province, perhaps founding some, and strengthening all. For his work seems to have been, not so much evangelizing, but the

[1] Luke xxii. 8.

[2] Acts iii. 1, 3, 4, 11; iv. 13, 19; viii. 14, 25; Galatians ii. 9.

much more difficult work of teaching, patiently, carefully, teaching; a work so essential to the life of any Church. So he would be quite familiar with the Churches to which the Revelation letters are sent, and would be well known by these people and loved and revered by them as a father in the faith.

This personal bit about John is of intensest interest in studying this book of his. It was to this man that Jesus could entrust the writing of this special message. John could take in what the Master was showing him as few, if any others, could. The close, sympathetic friendship made him able to take in what his old Friend and Master is now telling him in the glory. And he could give it out too, simply, fully, clearly, just as it was given to him.

Love can see and grasp, and can obey simply, where mere mental keenness fails. There is no tonic for the brain like love in the heart. No brain ever does its best work, nor can, until the heart is fired by some tender, noble passion. It was to Mary Magdalene who had such reason to love tenderly that Jesus showed Himself first after the resurrection.[1]

And it is to John, the bosom friend, whose friendship stood the severest test where all others failed, that He now shows Himself in glory, and entrusts this pleading message, and vision of coming events, and of the after glory. He that willeth to do the Master's will shall know surely and clearly what that will is. And he that goeth

[1] Mark xvi. 9; John xx. 1, 11-18.

farther yet, and willeth to give the tenderest love of his heart, ever kept at summer heat, shall know the Master Himself, in present personal touch, and in clear and clearing understanding of His coming victorious action and crowning glory.

John wrote a Gospel; one chief Epistle, besides the two very brief personal letters; and this book of the Revelation. The Gospel and Epistles were quite likely written while in Ephesus.

The Gospel was his plea to all men to whom it might come to accept Jesus as their personal Saviour. Its characteristic word is "believe." And the plan of it is a simple array of incidents about Jesus that would lead men to a warm, intelligent belief in Him.

The chief Epistle is written to the little groups of believers scattered throughout Asia Minor, and doubtless in the old home district of Judea, too. Its characteristic word is "abide." It is an intense plea, by a personal friend to abide, steadily, fully, in Christ, in spite of the growing defections and difficulties pressing in so close.

The Revelation was written, quite likely, on the island of Patmos while all was yet fresh in his mind; or possibly in Ephesus after his release from his island prison; or perhaps begun in Patmos and put into its final shape in Ephesus. It is written to the little groups of believers in and near Ephesus. It is a most intense plea to be personally true to the Lord Jesus in the midst of subtle compromise and of bitter persecution.

Its characteristic word is "overcome." It speaks much of the opposition to be encountered,

and tells of greater opposition yet to come, the greatest ever known. And it pleads, with every possible promise, and every warning of danger, that the true believer set himself against the evil tide, at every risk, and every possible personal loss, and so that he "overcome" in the Name of the Lord Jesus.

Old and New Woven Together.

The language in which the book is written is of intense interest. It is so unusual. It combines Hebrew thought and Greek speech. It is as though a Hebrew soul were living in a Greek body, and the soul has so dominated the body as to make decided changes in it. The thought and imagery, and the very words are largely taken over from the Old Testament, much of it not being found elsewhere in the New Testament. It is as though the Old Testament reaches clear over the intervening space and writes the last book of the New as an additional book of the Old, but with distinct additions. But all these additions are outgrowths of what is already in the Old.

But while the thought and imagery are Hebrew, the language is Greek. But scholars note that John's Greek here is different from that of his Gospel, and is indeed peculiar to itself, with new grammatical adjustments, as though better to express his Hebrew thought. Yet, like the Gospel, it is an easy Greek to learn and to understand. It is as though the Old Testament

were the warp of a new bit of fabric, with the New as the shuttle-threads, and yet with such additions as makes the pattern stand out much more definite and clear, and the colours in it more pronounced. Thus this end-book is a weaving of both Old and New into a new bit of fabric, but with a more distinct pattern than either.

This explains the use of the symbolism which is so marked here. The picture language of John's Revelation has seemed very puzzling. It has seemed like a new language, to which we had neither grammar nor dictionary, and the intended meaning of which we could only guess at. But this is because we are Westerners and a bit set in our western way. And possibly, too, though we dislike to confess it, because we have not gotten a clear, simple grasp of this old Book of God as a whole. The Bible is an Oriental book, written in the characteristic picture language of the Orient.

The truth is that the symbol or picture language is meant to make the book *easier of understanding.* We simply need to learn how to read picture language, not whimsically, but sensibly according to the laws of picture language. The symbolism or picture sees things as they look at the moment the picture is taken. The picture is meant to give one general distinct impression of the thing being presented, the details of the picture being of value only as they give coloring to that one general impression. It is concerned, not at all, or only in the most incidental

way, with the process by which the thing came to the point pictured.

There is a rare wisdom in the use of this picture language. It is really the common language not of the Orient merely, but of all the world. In our western half of the globe it is the language of the street, the common crowd, the common exchange of life, and of children. It is the language of the primitive peoples of all parts of the world. Everywhere the conventionalized book-language is spoken by the few. The picture, with its companion, the story, is the universal, the original, the natural language of the race.

On the mere human side here is one secret of the freshness of the Bible. It is the oldest book in some of its parts, but admitted to be the freshest and most modern in its adaptation to modern life. And the reason is simple. The pictures give *principles*. Principles don't change with the changing of centuries. Rules change. Principles abide. Details alter with every generation. Principles of action are as unchangeable as human nature, which is ever the same, east and west, below the equator, and above.

John's Revelation is naturally full of this picture language, for it is a gathering up of the chief threads of the old Oriental Hebrew fabric. It will help us understand the meaning if we keep in mind the simple rules of this Hebrew picture language.

John, of course, was a Hebrew, born and bred in a Hebrew home, and immersed in the old

Hebrew Bible from the time of his mother's milk. What Greek language and culture had come was a bit of the outer world come into his Hebrew home and life. Now in his old age the early memory is asserting itself.

Then too it is quite likely that in his imprisonment he had been brooding anew over the old prophecies, reviewing afresh events since the resurrection of Jesus,—the growth of the Church, and now the severe persecution, with himself a prisoner. And while he in no way doubts the unseen overruling Hand, yet he is seeking to get a fresh outlook into the future from the old prophetic writings.

And through all of this without doubt the Holy Spirit was brooding in unusual measure over this man, reviving early memory, bringing to his remembrance all things of other days, deepening impressions, bringing old facts into new perspective, giving clearer vision, mellowing and maturing both mind and heart into fresh plastic openness to further truth. And so we have this little book with its Hebrew soul and its Greek body.

The meaning of all this is very simple, and yet a meaning of intense significance. Here is summed up the whole of the revelation of God's Word. Here all the lines of Revelation meet. Almost two thousand years of inspiration come to a climax in this little end-book. Psalmist and prophet, historian and law-giver, Gospel and Epistle come to a final focus point in one simple intense message. The purpose of the book is in-

tensely and only practical. Here is the message of the whole Bible to Christ's people *for this present interval* between the Ascension and the next great step in our Lord's world-plan.

Jesus' Plea to His Friends.

And the message is simply this: put to us with all the intensity of the One who gave His very life for us, it is this,—that *we be personally true to our Lord Jesus* during His present absence. This comes as His personal request, that, in sweet, stern purity of life, in full glad obedience of spirit, in tender freshness of personal devotion, in holding absolutely everything, of talents and position and possession, subject to His call, and in keeping our eye ever open forward and upward for His return, we be true to Him.

He is the Lamb slain. Only through His blood is there salvation for any one. He is now allowing man fullest opportunity before He comes to set things right. This is the in-between time, much lengthened out. In the midst of formalism and subtle compromise, the tangling of ideas and issues, and the blurring of vision within His Church, He calls to His own blood-bought ones to be true to Himself.

There's a terrific moral storm coming. Wickedness will wax to a worst never yet known. Evil will be so aggressive, compromise so radical, temptations so subtle and coming with such a rush, and ideals of right so blurred and dimmed in the glare of the lower lights, that even those

of the inner circle will be sorely tried, and many will be deceived. Just at the bursting of the worst of the storm the crowned Christ will appear. He will come on the clouds before all eyes, take away His own out of the storm, then clear the storm by His own touch, and begin the new order of things.

The test coming will be terrific. He knows it. And his knowledge makes His plea intense that *we be true to Himself,* our beloved, crucified, crowned Lord, utterly regardless of consequences to ourselves. So we shall "overcome by the blood of the Lamb," and be joined with Him in closest intimacy during His coming reign over the earth.

There is a striking thing told us at the very outset of the book;—it is a revelation. That is, it is something revealed directly by God. It is the only book of the Bible of which we are told plainly and directly that it is a revelation.

It is not that the other books do not have the same inspirational characteristic. But our attention is explicitly called to the fact that this one is, in its entirety, a *direct* revelation; and not only so, but it is a revelation given directly by God to the Lord Jesus, and given in person by Him to John. This is significant. It marks out the message of the book as of the utmost meaning and importance.

This suggests a need. And the need of something of the sort is plain enough, if one think into it. Already in John's day there was a distinct break-away from the simplicity and purity

of the Gospel, both in the Church and in the lives of professed Christians. The messages to the Churches of Pergamum and Thyatira and Sardis show clearly that there had already begun a rubbing out of the sharp line of distinction between the Church and the world. The world spirit was—not creeping in, but—walking boldly into the life of the Church.

It is striking to note the thing that leads John to write his First Epistle, that is, the alarming conditions among Christ's followers. The spirit of compromise seems seeping in at every crevice. And worse yet, the spirit of Antichrist, that makes such a savage attack on Jesus, on the deity of His person, and the atoning significance of His death, this was openly at work among them.[1] These conditions, so familiar to those who first read his little Epistle, are the continual underscoring of His intense plea for *abiding.*

It is most significant that Jude's intense flame-like Epistle talks entirely about conditions within Church circles. Run through it again with this fact fresh in mind, and the significance of it stands out in a startling way. Peter's Second Epistle reveals the same sort of an atmosphere seeping in among the groups of disciples to whom he writes. Not only was there doubt and confusion about the meaning of the prophetic teachings, but even a sneering and mocking at the teaching about the second coming of our Lord.

[1] I John ii. 18-29; iv. 1-6.

These are a few indications of how things were in the Church generally before the first century had closed. It was a time of confusion and compromise. The air was tense. The need was critical. It would seem that if ever our Lord would give a simple direct revelation afresh, to His people, it would be in just such circumstances. And it reveals to us at once how grave things looked to His eyes, and how much depended on His followers having a clear understanding of how things would work out, that our Lord Jesus does do just this thing,—send a direct revelation that would meet just such a need.

More Alike than Different.

It is most striking that the conditions of the Church then and to-day are so much alike. The line between Church and world is either badly blurred, or quite wiped out. And this one fact throws a flood of light upon Church conditions. Within the Church, when it comes to the matter of what its real purpose of being is, and what the essentials of faith, the lines are hopelessly crossed and tangled, even though the surface shows so much striving toward at least a seeming unity, and so much aggressiveness in action. The common absence of real spiritual power, that unmistakable moving, like a breath, of the Spirit of God, is freely admitted.

It is a painful fact that membership in a Church no longer gives any clue to a man's vital belief, nor even to his moral conduct. There is

utter confusion about the practical meaning of God's prophetic Word, and what the actual outcome of the present order will be; that is, where such things are not quite dismissed from consideration. And, stranger yet, indifference, or an actual repugnance, to any mention of the Lord's return is the common thing. It is not surprising that earnest people are bewildered as to just what should be the attitude of one who would ring true to the absent Jesus. It hurts to remember that all this is the freely admitted commonplace, where such things are seriously spoken of.

Indeed it is of intense interest to note that just this sort of thing has marked the whole interval since these early Church days. Broadly the same characteristics have marked both world movement and the Church movement in this long interval. There is a unity characterizing the age since our Lord ascended. There have been differences, very sharp and marked, but always they have been differences in degree, now more intense, now less. The general characteristics have been the same in kind.

The need of the Church in the end of the first century is its need in the beginning of the twentieth. Surely the thing of all things needed is a simple, clear, understandable revelation direct from our Lord Jesus Himself. It was needed then. Clearly it has been needed in every generation since then. And one whose pulse is at all sensitive to spirit conditions to-day feels that surely it is the thing needed now.

And here it is, a revelation of Himself, crowned in the upper world, keeping in closest touch with things down in this world, telling us what the outcome is to be, and especially speaking of our attitude toward Himself in this present in-between interval.

Usually God's method with man is to give him enough of a revelation of Himself in nature, and in His Word, to start him straight, and guide him as he goes to school with himself as chief pupil, with all of nature to find out and develop, and so to get mastery both of himself and of nature and its forces. We recognize this as the best school-teacher method for good self-development.

But here something more seems needed. The situation down on the earth has gotten badly mixed up. Even though Jesus has been on the earth, and has died, and has sent down the Holy Spirit in such irresistible power, the situation in the world, and among His disciples, has gotten so subtly tangled and intense, the enemy is so viciously and cunningly at work, that only one thing will meet the need,—a revelation, a simple, direct, warm revelation given us personally by the Lord Jesus Himself. And here it is in this little end-book, with its vision of the glorified Jesus, its pleading heart-cry to His followers, and its simple but tremendous outlook into the future.

It would not be surprising if such a book should be made the subject of special attack by the evil one. It is not surprising, though it is deeply

grievous, that the common idea about this book among Christian people is that it is a sort of a puzzle, that it is impossible to get a simple, clear, workable understanding of its message. Parts of it are conned over tenderly and loved, a paragraph here, a verse there, and so on, but a grasp of the one simple message of the book seems not common, to put it mildly. No book of the sixty-six has seemed so much like a riddle to which no one knew the answer. And without doubt the full meaning of much will be quite clear only as events work themselves out. Events will be the best exposition of certain parts. But these parts, be it keenly noted, are not essential to the grasp of the whole message. God is intensely practical. Jesus was too intent on helping people to be otherwise than practical. He hasn't changed. He is too tremendously wrapped up in the outworking of His plans. The Bible is wholly a *practical* book. And this crowning end of it is intensely and only practical. It is with the clear conviction that it is entirely possible to get the simple grasp of it that shall steady our steps, and clear our understanding, and feed our personal devotion to the absent Jesus, our blessed Lord, that these few simple quiet talks have been put together.

Doing Leads to Understanding.

The outline of the book is very simple. After the brief introduction[1] and personal greeting,[2]

[1] Revelation i. 1-3. [2] Revelation i. 4-8.

there comes the wondrous vision of *the glorified Jesus,* and His personal message to John.[1] He is the Living One, who *became* dead for a great purpose, and is now living, never to die again. He is seen walking quietly among the groups of his followers, with eyes of flame, and heart of love, keeping watch over these, His empowered witnesses on earth.

And He tells John that he is to write to the groups of his followers a threefold message, a description of Himself as just now seen by John, a description of affairs in these Churches as seen by His own eyes, and an account of the things that are going to happen on the earth.

Then follows this description of the Churches. It is in a sevenfold personal message to His followers on the earth.[2] Then the vision of Himself in heaven as He steps directly into the action of the earth to take possession of His crown domain.[3] Then comes the account of coming happenings. It is a sevenfold view of a terrific moral storm on the earth, that will follow this advance step of His in the heavens. It is so terrific and includes so much, that it is possible to get a clear view of it and its sweep only by looking, now at this feature of it, and now at this; now from this angle of vision, and now from this other.

It is the final contesting of Christ's crown claim as He steps forward to assert it; the final

[1] i. 9-20. [2] Chapters ii. and iii.
[3] Chapters iv. and v.

outburst of evil unrestrainedly storming itself out. And it is the clearing-up storm, too. There is ever the shining of a clear light just beyond the outer rim of the terrible blackness of the storm clouds. This takes up the greater part of the little book, including chapter six, to the close of chapter eighteen.

And then there is given briefly the actual coming to earth in glory of the crowned Christ;[1] the new order of things under His personal reign;[2] a final crisis;[3] and then in a vision of wondrous winsomeness, God and men are seen dwelling together as one reunited family, though still with a sad burning reminder of the old sin-rebellion as part of the picture.[4] And the book closes with personal paragraphs to John and to the groups of Churches.[5]

Another of the striking things peculiar to this book is the personal plea that it be read and lived up to. At the very front-door step as one starts in he is met full in the face with this: "Blessed is *he* that *readeth,* and they that *hear,* (or give careful heed to) the words of the prophecy, and *keep* the things that are written therein."[6]

Here at the very outset is a plea, made to each one into whose hands the little book may come, for a reading, and a careful thinking into, and then, yet more, a bringing of the whole life up to the line of what is found here. The blessing of God will rest peculiarly

[1] xix. 1-xx. 3. [2] xx. 4-6. [3] xx. 7-15.
[4] xxi. 1-xxii. 5. [5] xxii. 6-21. [6] i. 3.

upon him who heeds this threefold plea. That man is moving in the line of the plan of God.

A little past the midway line of the book, all at once, abruptly, in the thick of terrible happenings being told, an unexpected voice comes. Clearly it is the Lord Jesus Himself speaking. It is as though He were standing by all the time throughout all these pages, watching with a sleepless concern. Now He speaks out. Listen: "Blessed is he that *watcheth,*" that keepeth ever on the alert against the subtle temptations, and the compromise that fills the very air, "and *keepeth his garments;*" [1] sleeplessly, kneefully, takes care that no breath of evil get into his heart, no taint of compromise stain his life, no suspicion of lukewarmness cool his personal devotion to the absent Jesus.

And again, doing sentinel duty at the rear-end, is the same plea. "Blessed is he that *keepeth the words* of the prophecy of this book." [2] Reading, heeding, obeying, watching, living up to, this is the earnest plea peculiar to this book. Clearly our Lord Jesus desires earnestly that it be read. And He expects us to understand it. And He pleads with us to live in the light of what He tells us here.

He that willeth to do shall know what he ought to do. He that doeth the thing he does know will know more. And that more done will open the door yet wider into all the fragrance of a strongly obedient life, and into a clear and

[1] xvi. 15. [2] xxii. 7.

clearing understanding of the Lord Jesus Himself.

He that brings his life bit by bit up to the level of the earnest plea of this special revelation, as bit by bit it opens to him, will find his understanding of it wonderfully clearing. Obedience is the organ of understanding. Through it there comes clear grasp of the truth.

A single recent illustration of this comes from Korea, that land that gives us so much of the romance of missions, as well as so much of its pathos. Dr. James S. Gale, of Seoul, tells of a Korean who had travelled some hundred miles to confer with him about Christian things. He recited to Dr. Gale the whole of the Sermon on the Mount without slip or error. After this surprising feat of memory, the missionary said gently that memorizing was not enough; the truth must be practised in daily life.

To his surprise the Korean quietly said: "That's the way I *learned* to memorize. I tried to memorize, but it wouldn't stick. So I hit upon this plan; I would memorize a verse, then find a heathen neighbour and practise the verse on him. Then I found it would stick."

That's *the rule for understanding* this revelation of Jesus through John, as well as all of this inspired Word of God. This rule simply, faithfully, followed will open up this little end-book which to many has seemed a sealed book. He that "keepeth the things" that are written here will find these pages opening to his eyes. He

that liveth the truth he does understand will understand more and better, and so live in the wondrous power of it, and in the sweet presence of Him who gives it to us.

III.—A SIGHT OF THE CROWNED CHRIST

"Since mine eyes were fixed on Jesus,
I've lost sight of all beside,
So enchained my spirit's vision,
Looking at the Crucified."

"The Lord Christ passed my humble cot:
I knew him, yet I knew him not;
But as I oft had done before,
I hurried through my narrow door
To touch His garment's hem.

"He drew me to a place apart
From curious crowd and noisy mart;
And as I sat there at His feet
I caught the thrill of His heart-beat
Beyond His garment's hem.

"Rare was the bread He broke for me,
As wine the words He spoke to me—
New life surged in, the old life died . . .
I cannot now be satisfied
To touch His garment's hem." [1]

[1] William Norris Burr.

A SIGHT OF THE CROWNED CHRIST

(Revelation, Chapter i.)

Transfigured by a Look.

No one ever had a sight of Christ's face and forgot. No one ever gets a sight of Him and gets over it. He is never the same man after that. He doesn't want to be the same.

A look into the face of Christ is transforming. You see Him; and you can never be the man you have been and be content. A change comes. You want a change. You must have it. This longing is the beginning of the deeper change. You can never be content again with being the man you have been.

It has always been so. It always will be so. For this is the natural thing. In the dawning twilight of Eden God looked into the face of the man he had fashioned. He drew very close to him, close enough to breathe his own breath into his face. And the man looked out into God's face, and took on God's likeness. So he became his own real self, as originally planned.

But while man was yet young, sin looked him in the face. And the man looked at sin with an evil longing look. And in that look he took in

some of what he saw. He was marred. The God image was hurt. He was not the same man. And he knew it. He felt it. His eyes were never the same after that exchange of looks with sin.

But God helped him. He didn't go away. He came closer for the sake of the sin-hurt eyes. And whenever man has looked into that wondrous God-face, even though seeing dimly and indistinctly, something within him makes a great bound. He recognizes the original of his own natural self. And he catches fire at the sight. A holy discontent springs up within.

> "Couldst thou in vision see
> Thyself the man God meant,
> Thou never more couldst be
> The man thou art—content."

But you have to see Jesus as He was in His humanity to see yourself the man God meant. And you have to see Jesus as He is now to see the God who meant you to be like Himself.

It has always been so. This has been God's simple method with men He would use. He has wooed and then wooed more, and a bit longer, gently, persistently, up and away and apart until at last the man's eyes were trained away from the lower glare enough to see the real things.

Then in some vision of the night, whose darkness helped hold back the lower earth lights, God has looked a man in the face once again. Or, perhaps in open day there came to him that

which he could not describe. But in his inner spirit he knew there was One with him whom yet his outer eyes could not see, but who *could* not be more real if his outer eyes did see.

And in that presence there was a mingling of exquisite tenderness and of limitless power that was overawing. Inconceivable purity and yet such an unspeakable graciousness seemed blended in this presence. And the man seeing was melted in his innermost being with the sense of tenderness, and bowed in awe to the lowest dust in the sense of overwhelming power. Those who have seen will understand how poor the words are to tell the story. And those who have not may wonder a bit until they, too, have seen.

Some Transfigured Men.

This it was that transformed that man of the early dawnlight named Enoch, the seventh from Adam. He was the head of the leading family of the race, the racial leader. He had lived well on into the seventh decade of his life.

Then the change came. He recognized a Presence with him, one day. That One unseen by unseeing eyes became real to him and then more real. He yielded to His wooing. He companioned with Him daily. This came to be the realest thing. And he was transformed by it. He grew constantly less like what he had been, and more like what he was originally meant to be, like his Companion. Constant contact re-

stored the original likeness. He was transformed before men's eyes, changed over from within.

Then one day the transforming forces had gone so far that he was transferred to the upper levels, where all *see His face,* and his likeness shines out of all faces. He never got over the sight that came to him that early day.

It was this that wooed the man of Ur away from his ancestral home to be a lonely pilgrim, a stranger among strangers. Nothing less or else could have broken the early attachments, the strongest of the East. That winsome wooing Presence became to him stronger than the strongest human attachments of his family and home land.

This it was that steadied him through the loneliness, the homelessness, the disappointments, the long delays, until it was the image of a new man, a transformed man, a faith-begotten man, that at length looked at him out of the eyes of his only begotten. This it was that steadied him through the hardest test of all with that only begotten, the fire test on Moriah. And that made the transformation yet fuller. For so he grew the liker him to whose presence he insisted on yielding as each test came.

So it was with that rare student of Egypt and Arabia. Trained in the best that man could give in the University of the Nile, and then further trained by absence from man in the University of the Desert, alone with sheep and stars, shifting sand and immovable rock, he wasn't ready for

his task yet. He was well trained but not yet transformed.

The fires had to be kindled, purifying, melting, fusing fires. And only fire kindles fire. The fire of the unburnt bush told him first of a new kind of fire, uncatalogued on the Nile. The fire of a Presence burned daily, not consuming him, but only the dross *in* him, as he led his race from Egypt to Sinai, out from the slavery of men up to the freedom of the presence of God. And then for six weeks, twice over, he was in the Presence of Flame on the Mount.

This it was that utterly changed him into the strongly gentle, patient, tender-hearted, wise man who taught and trained, lived with and led, the immature men and women whom God would weld into a nation, a God-nation. He never got over those two long visits to the Mount, nor has the world.

It was nothing else than this, long years later, that made the rugged man of the deserts brave the traitorous Ahab in his luxurious, licentious court. Without it, the sight obscured, the vision lost, he is a coward fleeing like a whipped dog before a bad woman, thinking only of saving his own skin. It showed himself, his weak, cowardly self, to himself.

A fresh vision that early morning in the mouth of the desert cave made the yet deeper more radical transformation. That unutterably gentle sound of stillness, too exquisite to be told, only to be felt by a spirit in tune, *that* left him not a whit less willing to brave danger than before,

but made over now into another sort, like him whose Presence in the cave so melted him down.

This new, gentled, mellowed, strengthened Elijah reappears in the man who received the birthright portion of his spirit. We know the new Elijah by the spirit that swayed Elisha. The old spirit, fiercely denouncing, calling down fire, slaying the priests, but with no grief-broken heart under these stern needful things,—this we think of familiarly as the Elijah spirit.

The new spirit, healing, teaching, sympathizing, leading, feeding, fathering, the greatness of gentleness and patience, these characteristics of Elijah's prophetic heir tell of the deep radical transformation by the wondrous unseen Presence that early morning in the mouth of the cave. This is the birthright gift of Elijah to Elisha. Elijah had a spirit-sight of God, and he never got over it. He became like Him into whose face he looked.

Heart Stimulant for the Brain.

But time fails, and words fail immensely more, to tell this thing. Let him who would know that transforming sight get quietly alone with Isaiah in the temple, and on bent knees linger unhurriedly, and listen, and watch, and breathe out his prayer, and strongly wait until something of the same brooding Presence be discerned that transformed this young Hebrew messenger of God.

Then let him get alone with the Moses of the

New Testament. For there is no man who was so utterly transformed, and so quickly, as the man on the Damascus road. The whole course of his character and life was radically changed as by a lightning touch. This is the most striking illustration of all. No man so reveals in himself the tremendous transforming power there is in the sight of the Christ as does this high-strung son of the Hebrew race.

But—words are such lame things. They cannot tell the story here. They are all one has to use. Yet they'll never be understood except as the light of experience shines upon them. When any one attempts to talk of such a thing as this of seeing God or Christ, his words seem so poor and lame and under the mark by the man who has had something of the vision. And they either are meaningless and uninteresting, or else they seem overstated, and quite beyond the mark to one who has had no inkling in experience of the thing itself.

I recall distinctly the experience of a Danish friend in Copenhagen. She had been trying to read in English a certain devotional book, but said she couldn't seem to grasp the meaning of the English words. They eluded her, and so the book didn't help her much.

Then she went through a time of sore stress of spirit in the sickness and death of her mother. A new experience of the nearness of God came to her. And then happening—as it seemed—to pick up the English book again she was amazed and delighted to find how much better and more

quickly she knew the words and sensed the meaning.

It is only as the heart is fired that the brain awakens. Experience gives the meaning to language. Without experience it is a dead language in meaning even though it be one's own mother tongue. Only the man who has caught something of the vision of Christ's face can understand the strong words used in talking of such a vision.

It is most striking to notice that even when the glory of God's presence was hidden beneath human wrappings in Jesus it still could be *felt.* Men felt that presence though they knew not just what it was they felt, nor why. When the glory came yet closer in the coming of Jesus, it must be well covered up for the sake of men's eyes, that they might not go blind at once; but its power of attraction could not be wholly hid.

So really human was Jesus in the outer circumstance of His life that His brothers of the home couldn't believe he was essentially different from themselves. But the attraction of that presence was felt constantly even through the human hiding of it.

John of the Wilderness instinctively recognized that here was more than the man he saw, and so obeyed His word. The crowds gathered eagerly in the Jordan bottoms in even greater numbers than to hear John, drawn by a power they felt they must yield to, and did yield to gladly.

From the first the crowds gathered thick about

Him, Jewish aristocrat, Samaritan half-breed and sinful outcast jostling elbows in their eagerness to hear, drawn by a power they could feel, but could not understand any more than they could withstand it. The children loved his presence and touch.

The bad in life were as resistlessly drawn up to a new life as the Greeks were drawn from clear beyond the blue waters of the Hellespont into His presence. The crowds were irresistibly drawn to follow on that last eventful journey to Jerusalem even while they felt "afraid."

It was the sight of the glory on the Mount that drew faithful John in *with* Jesus, and held him steady that awful night in palace and courtyard, and that later brought poor blasphemous Peter back for forgiveness. The two walking to Emmaus found their hearts all aflame, though they supposed it was only the chance stranger of the roadway they listened to.

Even those who hated Him were compelled to recognize the wondrous power of His presence. The Nazareth hands that itched to seize Him were restrained by His presence as He passed through their midst. Ten times did the Jerusalem crowds attempt his life, and ten times were they restrained by a power in Him that they could neither understand nor withstand.

The men officially empowered to arrest Him return empty-handed, confessing the overawing power of His words. That last week the leaders that were hotly plotting His death felt the strange

restraint of His presence while He quietly sat in their very midst, and swayed the crowds.

In the garden soldiers and priests alike were felled to the ground by the power of His presence. So it always has been. No one has ever had a sight of that Face, and gotten used to it, or gotten over it.

A Fresh Vision Needed.

But the thing we are specially needing to-day is a sight of Christ *as He is now.* It seems a bit strange that we don't get this more. One historic Church has Him fastened to a cross, never freed from the old fastenings. Another has Him set in picture frame, behind glass. And the multitudes prostrate themselves and reverently kiss the glass.

In widely differing Churches He seems quite covered up out of sight by classical ritual, beautiful music, and impressive stately service. The crowds gather and listen and bow low in hushed stillness. But, apparently, *Him they see not,* else how different their conduct as they come out, and their lives.

And yet as I have mingled with the worshippers in Catholic Churches in the south of Europe, in Greek Churches in Russia, and in congregations of the Church of England classed as " high," I have been caught by faces here and there in the crowd that clearly were reaching out hungrily for *Him,* and were having some sort, some real sort, of touch with Him, too. Yet it seemed to be

in spite of surroundings. The insistence of their hunger pierces through these to Him. He seems hidden from the crowd by them.

Scholarly orthodox theologians talk learnedly about Him, but Himself as He walked among us and as He is now, Him it would seem that they see not, at least not enough to burn through and burn out and burn up and send men out aflame with the Jesus-passion. Philosophies about Him that are classed as "liberal" and put attractively, yet have nothing of the burn in them that reveals Himself.

The more modern Church of the more western world seems to have gotten a new lease of aggressiveness in service, a new intensity in activities so numerous as to be a bit bewildering sometimes. The wheels whir busily and noisily. You feel them. But Him, the unseen presence that makes you reverently wrap your face up out of sight, and stand with awed heart to listen, *Him* we seem not to see.

The wondrous quiet Voice that makes your heart burn within you with a burning that cleanses and mellows and melts down, *that* we seem to hear only by getting away from the noise of the whirring wheels into some quiet corner.

There are in every Church and nation those who seem to have the close personal touch with Himself. Their faces and daily lives show the marks. Their lips may not say so much, for they who see most can say least of what they see. But the marks in the life are unmistakable.

Yet even here the sight of Christ emphasizes

chiefly the personal side, what He is personally to them. And what a blessed side that is only they who know it know. They think of Him as a personal Saviour, and the heart glows. They see Him at the Father's right hand interceding, and gratefully remember that He will forget no name where there is a trusting heart. They think of the Holy Spirit, the other Jesus, Jesus' other self, always "alongside to help," alongside *in*side. And they practise letting Him work out the Christ-likeness within themselves.

And all this is blessed, only blessed. They see Him in His personal relation to themselves. But there's something more than this. No one knew more of this blessed personal part than John. But John saw more than this on Patmos. He saw Christ *as He is now.*

This is clearly a new sight of Christ. It was new to John. It would seem to be new to us. It is new in the pages of this book. It is something different from any sight seen before. In the Gospels we see Jesus the *Man.* In carpenter shop and little whitewashed stone cottage, in the ministering life clear from the Jordan bottoms to the healing touch at Gethsemane's gate, and in the suffering clear up to the ninth hour of that fateful day He is the *Man,* one of ourselves, though clearly more even in His humanity than the humanity we are.

On the Transfiguration Mount the favoured inner three, the leaders, see the glory within shining out through the Man. So bewildered are they that the chief impression that remains is of

a blinding brightness. Yet this is up on a high mountain far away from the crowd, and from the haunts of men.

As Stephen is being stoned his eyes are opened to see the Son of Man standing in glory up at the Father's right hand. The Damascus traveller sees an overpowering burst of glory out of the blue and hears a voice speaking. In the epistles Paul pictures Him seated at the Father's right hand with an authority greater than any other. All the power He has is placed at the disposal of His followers on the earth. He Himself is above in the glory.[1]

But in this very end of the Book John is given a *new sight of Christ.* He sees Him *as He is now.* That is to say, this is the sight of Christ as He is now *characteristically.* It is the distinctive sight that stands out above all these others.

He *is* at one's right hand in closest personal relation, through His Holy Spirit. He *is* at the Father's right hand in glory waiting expectantly till the time is ripe for the next direct move on the earth. But there's more than these. There's a sight of Him that overshadows these. It is the characteristic sight that lets us see Him as He is peculiarly *now* in His relation to *affairs on the earth.*

Christ as He Is Now.

This new sight of Christ is the heart and soul of this crowning book, this end-book of the Book.

[1] Notably Ephesians i. 20-23.

It was out of this sight that this end-book grew. It is written wholly under the spell of this new sight of Christ. It is a revelation both *of* Jesus Christ and *by* Jesus Christ; first of, then by.

John begins his story by telling that he had gotten such a revelation, and of the special blessing attached to reading and fitting one's life to it.[1] Then follows his salutation to those for whom the revelation was given, and the book written.[2] It is peculiarly a *Church* book. Its message is not peculiarly for individual followers, but for groups of believers gathered together as Churches.

The salutation is absorbed with the One whom he has seen in the vision, what He has done for us in shedding His blood, and that He is actually coming again. "Behold He cometh with the clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they that pierced Him." The Jew is specifically designated: the coming has special significance for the Jewish nation. And all the people of the earth shall penitently mourn as they see Him. And then like an endorsing signature from the One of whom he is writing comes the sentence: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, saith the Lord God, who is and who was, and who cometh, the Almighty One."

Then comes the new sight of the crowned Christ.[3] It was on a Lord's day. John was on

[1] Revelation i. 1-3. [2] Revelation i. 4-8.
[3] Revelation i. 9-20.

the lonely sea-girt isle of Patmos. He was alone, brooding probably over some bit of the Word of God, and about the Jesus of whom he had been so earnestly testifying. It was these that had brought him to his lonely island prison. These ever burned within him, the wondrous written Word, the immensely more wondrous Word made flesh, of whom he had written, the Word that was God and became a Man and walked the will of God.

And as he brooded he became conscious of the Spirit of God overshadowing him, gentle as the soft breeze, noiseless as the fragrant dew, mighty as an enveloping presence that filled his being and had possession of him.

Then a voice spake and the tone of authority in it was unmistakable. "What thou seest, write." He was to see something. He was to tell what he saw. There's a delightful touch of the simplicity of natural speech here. He turned to *see* the *voice*. And he saw Him who was the voice of God to him. Then the sight is told in the same simplicity of speech.

There is a group of candlesticks, light-holders, made of gold. And in the midst of the group there is some One standing. He is in outer form like a *man*. But there is such an overpowering sense of divine glory that John falls on his face as one dead. Yet through all this overwhelming experience the impression of a man stands unmistakably out.

With keen, quick glance John takes in head and hair, eyes and feet, voice and hands, mouth and

face. A simple, natural man in every outer particular like himself, a brother man, wearing man's garb and girdle. This is the first impression indelibly stamped on John's mind.

But there's more, ah, much more than a man in this man! This is the stupendous part. There is some One, other than man, and more than man, possessing this man. The divine fills the human. It is this sense of the glory filling the man that is so overpowering to John.

A glorious presence overshadows the man and shines out of Him, but never obliterates nor makes the man less. That indescribable glory within shining out through the man magnifies every part of His human being. The head and hair are white, not like a pale or painted white, but a transparent whiteness, an intense searching, glowing light shining out from Him through the human head and hair.

The eyes are as a flame of pure fire, the feet like melting metal glowing in fire. And the whole countenance was as the sun in its noontime strength shining out of a rainless, cloudless sky. Humanity enveloped in deity, yet remaining true, full humanity. God within man immeasurably more than man, yet not overwhelming, not disturbing nor obliterating, any part of his humanity, rather making every part stand out more distinctly.

Is this incidentally a kind of parable? Is it something like this on an immensely humbler scale that was meant for us men? God the Holy Spirit dwelling in a man. He the chief one,

the divine one, yet expressing Himself *through* the man, and doing it fully to meet the need of the hour. His presence magnifying, vitalizing, and using every human power, yet Himself the dominant personality.

It is most striking to note that this is the same in principle as every appearance of God in the Old Testament pages. Sometimes He talked with men when there is no suggestion made of any appearance or of what the appearance was like. But wherever the appearance is spoken of it is always either fire or some touch of the human kind or both.

In Eden He walks and speaks, two human things. He talks with Abraham as a man talks, and ratified the covenant by passing fire through the pieces of the covenant sacrifice.[1] It is as a simple, natural man appearing at Abraham's tent door that He talks about Sodom. It is a human voice speaking about Isaac, though no appearance is mentioned. Moses sees a flaming bush, and hears a voice in the desert, and sees a whole mount aflame while a voice speaks at Sinai.

And so it was always: the fiery presence-cloud in the Wilderness, Joshua's Captain taking command, Manoah's angel ascending in the flame of the altar, the voice in the night heard by Samuel, the flooding of Tabernacle and Temple with the glory-presence, Carmel's fire descending, Elijah's "still small voice," Isaiah's vision of glory and the voice, Ezekiel's man of flame speak-

[1] Genesis xv.

ing, and Daniel's, both of the latter two akin to this Revelation appearance.

But there is a distinctness and a fulness of description here greater than at any previous time, yet the same essential thing as at every appearance of God in Old Testament pages. The coming of Jesus among us has brought God closer to us and made Him mean more. Jesus was God coming closer and in a way that we could understand better and take hold of more easily.

The Identifying Mark.

But let us reverently look a little closer that we may understand yet better. There are certain characteristics of this Man of Fire that are allowed to stand sharply out here. We are meant to look at them. This is part of the purpose in the heart of Christ in letting us see Him as He is here.

The sense of *purity* is intenser than can be put into words. Fire is pure. There is nothing so pure. It resists impurity. It burns it up. It is most significant that this is the one thing familiar to us that always accompanies the presence of God as He appears to men. It is always in fire whether to speak His message of peace and love or to remove the impurity of evil.

Our God is a consuming fire. Yet fire only consumes what can't stand its flame. The fire reveals purity and makes pure. God is pure. The presence within the man looked out in eyes

of flame, in a countenance like the sun, and feet like molten brass glowing in a furnace. There could be no stronger statement of purity than this.

Then there is an overwhelming sense of *authority*. That seems the human word to use, though the word seems to tell so much less than John felt. John feels it more than he can tell it. He cannot tell it in words. His limp figure lying flat on the earth tells what words never can. He had seen the glory outshining in the Transfiguration Mount, but this is unspeakably beyond that.

There was a voice like a trumpet. It commanded John to write. It says: "I *became* dead, and, behold! I *am* alive forever more." It is an authority over life to yield it up, and over death to put it to death, and call life back, never again to be touched by the finger of death. No such authority is known among men to-day. And this is further emphasized in the quiet words: "I have the *keys*—the control—of death and of the whole spirit world."

But immensely more than all this to John was the intense feeling of majesty which completely overpowered him. The sense of authority was overwhelming. The items in the description can thus be catalogued, but it is impossible to get the overwhelming sense of majestic authority that came to John, except as he got it,—by a *sight*, something of a sight of this great crowned Christ.

But *who* is this? Is this not merely Ezekiel's

vision repeated?[1] He saw just such a vision, one in the likeness of a man, enveloped in fire, and sitting on a throne. And the effect was the same as Ezekiel lies flat on his face. Is it not the same as Daniel saw?[2] A *man* clothed in linen, aflame with inner fire, and the same authoritative voice, and Daniel in a deep sleep of awe-stricken stupor with face on the ground? He does indeed seem to be the same. The descriptions tally remarkably.

But listen. He speaks. And the sense of terrifying authority in the voice that spake is gentled to John's tense ear in the quiet words that come. Like the loving words that came to Daniel's quaking heart is the personal message that came to John,—"Fear not." And with the words, as ever, come the new sense of stilling peace within. "I am the First and the Last, and the Living One."

Still it may be Ezekiel's Man even yet, or Daniel's. But listen: "and I *became dead.*" Ah! this identifies Him. Now we know for the first time that this Man of Flame is Jesus our Brother-man. The cross becomes the mark of identification. The form of the words as spoken fits in with the sense of authority. With great strength of heart in carrying out a great purpose He "*became* dead."

This *is* Ezekiel's Man and Daniel's and *more,* unspeakably more. The Man they saw has lived amongst us for a generation of time, and then given His life clear out for us. He has be-

[1] Ezekiel i. 26-28. [2] Daniel x. 5-9.

come more in coming as Jesus. He has taken human experience and suffering up into Himself. He was Creator. He has become more—Saviour.

There is the same purity and authority speaking out here as there. But here is *love* speaking out as never was spoken out before. Here is love *lived* out; aye, here love is *died* out, and never living so much as when dying. Here is love putting death to death for us. Purity and authority fastened on a cross! This is love such as man had never known, and God never shown before. Calvary lets us see the love that burned in the purity and controlled in the authority.

John's Man is Ezekiel's and Daniel's, but with the love shining out through purity and authority, and outshining both. Yet that love is the purity and authority combined in action. We don't know love only as we know God. And we don't know God only as we know Jesus not living merely but pouring out His life for men. This is love—that Man, that God-man, but with the God-glory hidden within, using all His authority over His life to fasten His purity on a cross with the thorns of our sin, and then throttling death and bringing up a new sort of deathless life for us. This—He—is love.

The Outstanding Characteristic.

But we haven't gotten to the heart of this yet. There is immensely more here than even

this. The distinctive thing, the characteristic thing in this sight of Christ, is yet to be noticed. All of this can be gotten from other sights of Christ. But notice now keenly *where this Man of Fire is.* For this is the distinctive thing. He is not up in the heavens, as in Ezekiel. He has not come on a special errand, as in Daniel's experience.[1] He is walking *down on the earth.* His whole concern is about affairs on the earth.

But note where He is on earth: not in Jerusalem, the Jew centre; not in Rome, the world's ruling centre, nor in Athens or Corinth, the world's culture centres. He is seen walking among a small group of candlesticks. This is the centre of earth action for Him. This is *the significant thing* of this new sight of Christ. Let us look at it a moment to get at the simple significance of the scene.

The candlesticks, we are told, are the Churches, the little groups of followers banded together here and there. These small groups of Christ's followers are called *candlesticks* or lampstands.

There is no suggestion yet of their giving any light. No lighted candles nor oily wicks are burning and shining. They are only candle*sticks.* They are of gold, the most precious metal, but they can give no light, they can only hold the light some one else supplies. The Man standing amongst them is the light. The whole effect of the sight of Christ here is that He is the light. The presence within the man shines out through head and eyes and limbs, as light, in-

[1] Daniel x. 20.

tense dazzling light, even as the sun in his strength.

Here is the distinctive thing. Christ's whole interest centres in the earth. All heaven is bending over watching the run of events down here. The intensity of His suffering and death tell the intensity of Christ's interest in the movement of things on the earth. He has a plan. He has put His very life into it. It centres wholly in the affairs of us men down here. And it centres in His Church.

This quite upsets our common ideas about the centre of things down here. We class London and New York as the great financial centres; Paris and Berlin as the great fashion and military centres. Rome is the centre of authority of the Catholic Church, and St. Petersburg of the Greek Orthodox. The Man who holds all power in His hands, and on whose word everything depends, quietly brushes all this aside with scarce a move of His hand. The earth-centre of things is the Church. That is, the groups of His followers banded together in various parts of the world.

Sometimes it is seen as a magnificent organization intimately connected with the machinery of government. Sometimes as very small groups of persons with no social standing, despised and reckoned as not worth reckoning with. But this is the thing He is depending on for getting out to His world. All His plans centre here.

He is the light. The light He gave and gives through nature, and within every man's breast,

has been awfully darkened through refusal and neglect to use it, through stubborn self-will. It is so darkened that ofttimes it seems to have been quite put out. His coming amongst us as one of ourselves, living our life, dying on our behalf to free us from sin, rising again victorious over death, sending His Holy Spirit to make all this real and living to each of us,—this is the light at its full shining, the flood-light.

He has made a plan for sending this flood-light to every one in every part of the earth. That plan centres in His followers. He is the light. The Church is the light-bearer, the candlestick. It is to hold *Him* up in such a way that men everywhere can get in direct touch with Him. When He is held up, the darkness goes. The darkness can't stand the light. This is the immensely significant thing here. This is the sight of Christ needed to-day, a sight of Him as He stands *waiting* on the Church to carry out His plan for the earth.

The faithfulness of the Church is not measured by compact organization, costly houses of worship, impressive services, eloquent scholarly preaching, and a ceaseless round of organized activities. It can be told only by how much of the spirit of the Christ who died is carried, in the daily life of its individual members, into home and social and commercial circles until men are compelled to feel its power in conviction of the sin of their own lives.

Nor yet is it told by transplanting the western type of civilization to far-away lands, with schools

and hospitals and innumerable humanizing influences. All this may be blessed. And it will be blessed and blest. But it is the incidental thing. It is sure to follow where the Jesus light is allowed to shine clearly through and out. It is quite possible to have these good things without getting the real Christ. It is quite impossible to have Christ Himself without such influences coming, too.

The emphasis must be not on these things, but on Him, Christ. Men need Him. He answers the heart longing, and only He can. He changes the nature, and nothing else is enough. The Church is to take the loving, healing, personal Christ to men in the fulness of His power, and to all men. This is the measure of its faithfulness.

What Christ Sees.

The tremendous question that crowds in here is this, What does this Man of Fire see as He stands among His followers? And He tells us. This is why the vision is given. He wants us to see things as they look to His eyes of flame.

The Man and His message are one thing here. Chapters one, two, and three belong together, and should be held together in our minds. We have put the Man and His message as separate talks to get a clearer grasp of each. But they are *one*.

Now we recall enough of the message to note this. Five-sevenths of the light-holders are in

bad shape. The lamps are smoky, badly smoked, and cobwebbed. The light is dimmed. It can't get out through the lamp. The crowds are standing in the darkness and falling into the ditch by the side of the road.

Two-sevenths let the light clearly out. The others are an intermingling of light and light obscured, but with the obscurity overcoming the other. The net result is an irritating smokiness. And the movement unhindered would naturally be toward a steady increase of smoky irritation and obscurity until no light can get through. This is what He lets us see that He sees.

Now the instinctive thing to do with a smoky lamp irritating nostrils and eyes is to put it out. That is the first instinct. The second is to trim the wick and do whatever else it needs to correct the smokiness. *Yet He waits.* That first natural instinct is restrained. The candlesticks are not yet moved out of their place. The light still tries to get out through them. The human candlestick may yet do the needful trimming and cleaning. With marvellous restraint He *waits.*

It is a tremendous scene that is stretched out here before us,—purity and authority combined in One who is standing in the midst of impurity and failure. The purity is more intense than we can grasp. The authority is greater than any one *can* realize. The impurity, the failure, are bad clear beyond what we can take in. The whole natural instinct here would be a *cleansing,* instant and radical, a correcting of the evil. Yet He waits. The purity would act

through the authority; the authority restrains the purity. Love quietly, strongly holds both in check. This restraint, this inaction is tremendous.

Why this inaction? this restraint? And the answer is simple, and as sweeping as simple. His plan at this stage shall have fullest opportunity. His followers will be given full opportunity to the last notch of time and the latest possibility of their being yet true.

All the intensity of His love, all the eagerness of His expectancy,[1] all the fulness of His plan for the earth, yes all the millions of the race, all the misery and ignorance, the sin and darkness, the millions of babies being born into wretchedness, and the millions of non-Christian women being held in slavery, and the countless numbers in every land groping along in a darkness that not only can be felt, but that is felt to the hurting point and then past that to the insensitive stupor,—all this waits.

With a heart that feels all that any man is feeling and that breaks under it, He waits that fullest opportunity shall be given His followers to be true. If His Church is set aside it will be only at the last moment when her failure is utterly hopeless. If the candlestick is removed out of its place, it will be only after it has completely removed itself out of all touch with the Light. A candlestick holding out no light is an utterly useless thing to the man in the dark.

It is possible for the Church to be a magnifi-

[1] Hebrews x. 13.

cent organization, an honoured institution, exerting immense influence in national politics, enormously rich in gold and in scholarship and in traditions, and even in carrying forward an aggressive missionary propaganda, and yet be faithless to its one mission. If the Church should fail in this its one mission, then the waiting time is over. The way is clear for the next step in the world plan. And a momentous step that would be, beyond our power to grasp. But the waiting time still holds out.

This is the simple, tremendous plea of this new sight of the crowned Christ as He is shown here. The centre of the universe to Him is this earth. The centre of things on the earth is His Church. The centre of things in the Church is its giving Jesus the Light out to all the earth.

And if this be the way things looked to His eye at the close of the first century, how, think you, do they look at this beginning of the twentieth? Has that momentum of movement toward increasing smokiness slacked? Is the waiting time nearly run out?

The present is a momentous time. Even men of the world speak of the world-wide restlessness as pointing to some impending event of world size. And he who is in some sort of simple touch with the spirit world can feel the air a-thrill with the possibility of world events impending, even while he wonders just what and when.

One in the Midst.

It is most striking how it came about that John got this sight of Christ. The change was not in Christ's presence, but in John's eyes. Christ did not come. He was there. John's eyes were opened. Then he saw Him who stands watching and waiting. *Christ is here.* The Man of Fire and of restraining love is here on the earth in the midst of His Church looking and longing, listening, and feeling.

If only our eyes were opened to see! There standeth One in our midst whom we recognize not. Wherever any company of believers banded together as a Church to worship and pray and break holy bread are gathered, under whatever local name or in connection with whatever Church communion, *He stands in the midst,* this crowned Christ of the Patmos Revelation.

Our eyes need treatment. The hinge of the eyelid is in the will and in the heart. A bended or bending will opens the eye. A brooding heart opens it yet more in spirit vision. Then we shall see Him, *as He is now* in our midst, waiting our obedience.

Those forty days between the resurrection and the ascension are seen to be illustrations of this. One can see through this Revelation sight that this is one of the chief things the Master is teaching as He still lingers on earth in His resurrection body.

Along the old Emmaus road, gathered about the evening meal in the twilight, twice in the

upper room at Jerusalem, He appears to little groups of His faithful followers. Their hearts are burning with the thought of Him, they are talking with both tongue and eyes about Him. But that He is in their midst is the last thing to come into their minds. Then their eyes are opened to see Him in their midst. It was a forty-days' session in their training school. Then He said quietly as His bodily presence goes up into the blue: "Lo! *I am with you all the days until the end.*" Their mission and His presence are inseparably linked.

And it is striking again to note how John's Gospel ends. The others describe the Ascension. John begins his Gospel with Jesus in the bosom of the Father before the world was, and ends with Him walking and talking with a little group of fishermen along the shore of the waters of Galilee's Lake.

This is what the Church needs to-day, a sight of Christ *as He is now*. Nothing else can save its life. And nothing less can save its mission from utter impending failure.

And yet while the distinctive message here is for the Church, it is an individual message, too. It is for each of us. I am the Church, as much of it as I am, counted as one. You are the Church. The Church is made up of you and me and the rest of us. I must take this message for as much of the Church as I am. The Man of Fire is depending on me to be a candlestick for His light. It is on me He is patiently waiting to obey as fully as He means I should.

And on you.

A recent incident is told of a man whose name is a familiar one in the financial world, who died a few years ago. He was the executive head of one of our country's great railways. And a man of remarkable largeness of insight and grasp, and of unusual power of execution. He dealt in hundreds of millions as easily as most of us deal in dollars, and his rugged honesty has never been brought into question. His greatest achievement bulks big in the material structure of one of our great eastern cities.

But his gigantic tasks ran his strength to ebb tide, and then it was seen that the tide was running out. As he lay in the sick chamber a minister called, whose ministry had touched large numbers of the men in the railroad of which the sick man was head, and in the course of conversation tactfully asked:

"Are you a Christian, Mr. Blank?"

"Yes," was the quiet, prompt reply that rather surprised the minister.

"How long have you been a Christian, Mr. Blank?"

"Two days," came the answer as promptly and quietly.

Feeling that there was an interesting story under these answers, the minister gently pressed the question. Then the story came out.

"You know William, who handles freight out here at ———?" the sick man asked.

"Yes."

"He showed me the way."

"William" had been a worthless, drunken man of the "down and out" sort. He had been converted at some mission and been radically changed. He had gotten employment at one of the freight-handling stations of this railroad system. It was rough, hard work, but he had gone at it earnestly in his purpose to live an honest life. And in his quiet, earnest way he was always seeking a chance to speak to men of Christ as a personal Saviour, until he became known throughout that part of the system for his simple, earnest piety.

As the sick man realized the seriousness of things for him he had sent for this William. The president of the road whose capitalization ran into hundreds of millions sent for the rough-handed freight handler. And William in his simple, earnest way had pointed the sick man to Christ. And the man of millions had made a new sort of transaction. Christ and he had an understanding.

And as the sick man told the minister the story he paused, and then added, "*I have given my strength to the secondary things.*"

This was the judgment of this shrewd man of big affairs as the new light had come into his life at its close. Happily he had gotten the readjustment of values in time for readjustment of personal relationships. But his life's strength was gone.

If we might get the readjustment that would put secondary things in second place, and put wrong and useless things clear out, *in time to be of some use to our blessed Lord.*

IV.—A MESSAGE FROM THE CROWNED CHRIST

"The glory of love is brightest when the glory of self
is dim,
And they have the most compelled me who most have
pointed to Him.
They have held me, stirred me, swayed me,—I have
hung on their every word,
Till I fain would arise and follow, not them, not
them,—but their Lord!" [1]

[1] Ruby T. Weyburn.

A MESSAGE FROM THE CROWNED CHRIST

(Revelation, Chapters ii and iii)

Patmos Spells Patience.

Patience is strength at its strongest, using all its strength in holding back from doing something. Patience is love at flood pleading with strength to hold steady in holding back.

The love in the strength insists on waiting a bit longer for the sake of the one being waited for. The strength in the love obeys the love passion and takes fresh hold in holding back.

Patmos spells out the patience of our Lord Jesus. It tells the strength and tenderness of His love. Olivet spelled out His *plan,* His great sweeping plan, *through His followers,* for a race. Calvary spelled out His *passion,* passion of love, passion of suffering, in dying for a race.

Calvary, Olivet, and Patmos are inseparably linked, the gentle slope of the Jerusalem hillside, the little mount to its east, and the little rocky isle in the far Ægean. Calvary was the passion of love pouring out a life for a race. Olivet was the plan of love for telling a race, till every one would know the love by the feel. Patmos is the patience of love pleading with the should-be

tellers of the story to carry out the plan, and waiting, and then waiting just a little longer.

Olivet had heard the last word. There the Master had told the disciples the plan. All the race was to be told and taught, bit by bit, earnestly, repeatedly, patiently, tirelessly, by word and act and life. He Himself unseen by outer eyes would always be with them, His supernatural power making real and living what they told and taught. This was the plan. Olivet was to be the executive of Calvary, bringing home to men and making vital to them what had been done there.

Then Jesus went up on the Cloud. And they went out everywhere. And His power convincingly went with them just as He had said. Within a generation the news and the power had gone together to the outermost rim of the world they knew.

They were expecting Him to return as a result of this witnessing of theirs. The next time they see His face and hear His voice will be as He comes on the Cloud out of the blue. So they understand and believe. This is their constant expectancy.

Now that generation has moved off the scene of action. Another generation has come in its place, and has almost run its course and moved off the scene. And still they are looking forward to and talking about His return.

But now to this new generation of His followers something quite different comes. Instead of Himself coming in glory there comes another

last message to them. It fits perfectly into the Olivet message, but goes further and says something more.

The Olivet message is about taking the light of the Gospel message out everywhere. The Patmos message in its pictured setting of candlesticks and Man of Fire and blazing light recognized this as the one thing to be done, but says there's something the matter with the candlesticks.

The Olivet word is about taking the message. This Patmos word is about the messengers. That one is about the *service* of His followers; this other about their *life*. The life underlies the service. Nothing can so hinder and hurt the service as a life not true in itself. Here something in the life of the Church is hindering its service. The Master's plan at this stage is in danger.

His broader plan extends beyond this Church movement. This is one great step to be followed by another. That broader plan had been outlined at the first Church Conference, held in Jerusalem. James, the presiding officer, said that the carrying of the Gospel to all men was to be followed by a national regeneration of the Jews; and then through a regenerated Jewish nation there would be a new era of world-wide evangelization,[1] and with this the Conference was in agreement.

The leaders among these early disciples are eagerly anticipating Jesus' return to carry on the

[1] Acts xv. 14-18.

next stage. They understand that what they are doing is preparing the way for this next step.

But now instead of returning to carry forward the broader plan here comes another message. Apparently things are not going satisfactorily. The plan at this stage is in danger, while the Calvary passion back of it still burns. Failure is impending. The Master *might* sweep aside the men that are failing, and press on Himself into the next step of His plan. For the case is urgent. A race is waiting. The darkness thickens.

But instead He waits. With patience and strength and love beyond our power to grasp He waits. This is the setting of the Patmos message, to which we now turn.

The Unity of the Message.

We must keep our eyes on the Man who is talking. His overawing presence gives tremendous meaning to His words. That gentle touch of the right hand has no doubt strengthened John even as Daniel was strengthened. And he is standing and looking as he listens. But the sight of that wondrous Man walking among the candlesticks floods his face and his whole being indescribably as he listens to the message spoken.

The overpowering sense of awe, of reality and power, and of the tremendous meaning of what is being said never leaves. So he listens.

So we must listen. So only can we get into the meaning of these words. The words will mean only as much as the Man means in the intensity of His presence. You must keep your eye on this crowned Christ as you listen.

The seven-fold description given us of Christ is the key to these seven messages. The partial description beginning each message is seen to fit into the particular condition of the Church spoken to. Yet all these bits of description must be put together to get the full description. It is a seven-fold description of one person.

And so all the messages must be taken together to see the Church as He sees it, and to get His message to it. It is one message. A look at the seven promises made to the overcomers makes it clear that all seven are one promise. It is not that one overcomer receives one thing, and another another, but each one gets all of what is mentioned in the seven. A rather careful, swift look at these promises makes this clear enough.

It is spoken to one Church in seven groups in seven different cities. There is one call to repentance, one warning of what will happen to the unpenitent at five successive stages, one plea to hear seven times repeated, and one blessed result to the overcomer, in a seven-fold statement.

And there is just one evil to be recognized and fought. That evil is seen to grow from one degree to another, from bad to worse and worst. Its emphasis changes from one phase to another. It has shown itself differently in dif-

ferent parts of the world, and in different ages since, but it is the one evil power, always the same behind the different manifestations.

There is rare combination and adaptation in this message. It was meant for the Church of that day, and of every day since, and for some future day. For it stands as the one message from Christ to His Church between Olivet and His return. It is meant distinctively for the Church as a whole, and yet it makes an intense personal appeal to each one in the Church.

It is spoken to the little groups of Churches in Asia Minor grouping about the city of Ephesus, which had been founded by Paul and ministered to by John. And without doubt it fitted into the conditions and tendencies of those particular seven Churches.

But these are representative of all. Probably any group of seven would be representative of all in varying degree. The mother Church at Jerusalem is not named, nor the great Gentile missionary Church at Antioch. But these messages with their approval and criticism, their warning and promise, were meant for all the Church in Asia and Europe and Africa at that time.

They are found to fit into the need of the Church scattered throughout the world in every generation since then. Always there have been little groups that were faithful and true, always some suffering because of their faithfulness and remaining faithful in spite of suffering. And always those who have been formal, who have companioned with evil, who have been swamped

by the evil with which they companioned, and those practically asleep or dead.

This Patmos message will be found to fit the Church of to-day with remarkable accuracy and faithfulness. And the whole probability is in favor of finding that it will fit peculiarly the future Church, the Church at the end of this present period.

This whole book of the Revelation is peculiarly a Church book. While it is full of instruction and plea for our individual lives, yet it is distinctively *the* Church book. It stands out among the books of the New Testament as the one book addressed to the Church and to the whole Church.

It gives the great bulk of its space to an awful time of persecution that is coming to the Church at some future time. This is spoken of elsewhere, notably by Jesus in His talk with the disciples on Mount Olivet, but it is the chief subject treated here. And it is treated with great detail. The name commonly applied to this coming persecution is the great tribulation.

It is significant that the book that clearly is distinctively a Church book is taken up chiefly with a description of that future persecution. It leads to the deep conviction that this book of the Revelation so fitted to the need of the Church when spoken, and in every generation since, will be found to be peculiarly fitted to that generation of the Church that is to pass through this great coming persecution; that is, to the Tribulation Church.

It will probably be the mainstay and comfort of those who will insist on being true during those awful days, regardless of the suffering involved. No book has been more slighted and ignored. It has been called by some within the Church of our own generation "the joke of the Bible." It will likely come to be the book most studied and loved for its light and help in the terribly troublous times ahead. There will be an eager, hungry searching for every scrap of information, and for any fresh ray of light on its meaning.

The Seven-fold Message.

Now this seven-fold message lets us see things through Christ's eyes. He is letting them and us see what He sees. The Scottish poet's thoughtful lines might well be changed to get the yet better look: "Oh! wad some power the giftie gie us, to see oursel's as" *God* sees us. It would do more than free us from blunders and notions. And we are needing more.

Each one of these seven messages begins by our Lord drawing their eyes to Himself. This is the thing needed most. And this will give meaning and force to the message. They are to be looking at Him as they listen. Then He speaks of all the good things He sees. Then of the faulty, weak, bad things, in a few simple but unmistakably plain words. No one could doubt what He meant.

Then is the pleading call to repent, with the

faithful warning of what will surely happen if they don't. Then the earnest plea that His words be listened to and taken to heart, and the wondrously gracious promise held out to those who steadily set themselves against the evil, and who get the victory.

Let us look for a moment at each of these Churches as seen by those searching eyes of flame.

Ephesus is the centre of the group, the natural leader, the largest and most influential, perhaps the mother Church of the group, where Paul and John had put in so much time and strength, and whence they reached out to these others.

Christ reminds them of His presence in their midst and His control of the angel messengers that minister to them. Then he speaks of their good deeds, their tireless activity, steadfast endurance, intense zeal for the true faith, with special emphasis upon their unwearying steadfastness even under sore difficulties, and their hatred of those who made compromise with evil so hateful to Himself.

But there is something lacking, the tender personal love for Himself. There's intense loyalty to Church and to the faith, but a lack of personal love for Himself. And the startling thing is that this is said to quite outweight all these good things. They may have these things without the love, but they cannot have the love without having these things, and at a finer temperature.

And this defect is crucial. If persisted in it is fatal. It will actually mean their *rejection as His messenger.* This is the critical thing which we seem to have such a hard time getting hold of. The essential qualification for true service is the personal attachment to our Lord Jesus Himself, that warm heart love which the human heart longs for and gives to some one. He longs for this. This is *the* essential; not Church organization nor creed, not zeal for orthodoxy, but warm love for a person. Service, witnessing, all the rest, are valuable to Him in reaching His world only as they grow out of a tender love for Himself.

And the startling thing is that this privilege and opportunity of service is to be taken away *not* because displeasing to Him, but because it fails of the end in view. The candlestick is only removed because it is no longer serviceable; it is not giving out the light. This earnest, aggressive, orthodox, patiently-enduring Church is to be rejected as a light-holder, because it is not holding out the light. This is tremendous!

The group in *Smyrna* is tenderly reminded of the suffering of their Lord, for they are filling up what is left behind of His suffering. This tells at once the depth of their personal love for Him, nothing could tell it more.

They are poor in money and so despised, but rich in faith and so precious to Him. They are suffering at the hands of the Jews, who were the outspoken, intense, fanatical enemy of the Christians. There is no reproach, only earnest en-

couragement to keep steady even through fiercer fires yet to come.

The description of Himself to the *Pergamum* group is startling. He is the one with a sharp two-edged sword. There is something here He must fight against. They are frankly told that they have had a hard place to witness in, and earnestly commended for being true even in the midst of persecution.

But there's something wrong, and it is very serious. It is as wrong and bad as it can be. There is actually compromise with evil, partnership with the world in its wickedness. The thing is put in the intensest way possible by characterizing it as adultery. No stronger language could be used to tell how He sees the evil they are guilty of. And they are plainly told that He will fight against them. They have made themselves His enemy by joining His enemies.

The *Thyatira* group is reminded of the purity of their Lord, who cannot stand impurity but searches it relentlessly out, and pursues it to the death. There's a faithful minority here. Their activity and love and faith and patience and increasing activity in service are all counted carefully over and warmly commended.

But the evil here is much worse. It is put into the gravest language. "Thou sufferest the woman *Jezebel.*" This is most significant. There is no worse character named in the whole Old Testament. She not only represented the worst adulterous uncleanness in herself, but she

was the national leader energetically fostering unclean idolatrous practices among the people. Jezebel pulled God's light-holder nation down to the lowest moral level it ever reached. She brazenly dominated king and people, and remained stubbornly obstinate to the terrible end.

Christ brings *her* name in here. Again this is tremendous. No more terrific parallel could have been made. Here evil characterized as adulterous has actually come to a place of leadership in the Church. With great longsuffering time has been given that all this might be changed, but with Jezebel-like obstinacy it was determined that there would be no change. And the inevitable result that will surely follow continued obstinacy will be a great tribulation or deadly persecution.

The *Sardis* group is told that Christ is the centre of all life and help, in the control of the Holy Spirit and of the angel messengers. There is nothing to commend here. There are some who insist on living true lives, but they are a scanty scattered few, not enough to count.

There are some ragged remnants of good, but even these are sickly and nearly dead. The Church is well organized, energetic, standing high among men, but with an utter absence of spiritual life. The personal lives of most are like dirty garments. And the warning is this: He will come as a thief, that is unexpectedly, disagreeably, to take away what they prize most and leave them stripped and naked.

The longest message is to the group in *Philadelphia.* Christ reminds them that He is holy in character, faithful to His promises, having full control, and giving opportunity of service as the highest reward of faithfulness. This candlestick is giving out light, for it is given yet further opportunity of shining.

The chief characteristic of this group is its steady plodding faithfulness. They are not spoken of as brilliant or talented, but faithful in the midst of opposition. He loves them with the sort of deep love drawn out by love freely given. And a special promise is given, a significant promise. A great persecution is coming, an awful testing time to all the earth. But He will keep them *through* this unhurt because they have been keeping His word so faithfully.

The common reading here is, "I will keep thee *from* the hour of trial." It is quite as accurate to read "through" in place of "from." And there is good reason for taking this as the sense here. The word underneath here is translated by several different words in other passages.

Where a word in one language may be translated by any one of several words the general sense of the passage must decide which one correctly expresses the meaning. Here the meaning must be gotten from the whole trend of New Testament teaching. Like the Israelites during the plagues that came to Egypt these faithful ones will be kept untouched through this terrible time that is to come.

The *Laodicea* group is to be talked to plainly by one who is a true, faithful witness in dealing with His people's faults, and who has all the authority of God in doing so. This is the second group that actually has not one good thing to be commended. There is no false teaching, no compromise with evil; they are simply *asleep.* Rich, influential, self-satisfied, grown fat and sleek,—so they seem to their neighbours and themselves. Wretched, poor, blind, naked,—so they are. And the chastening threatened will be of the severe radical sort that strong love insists upon.

A Heart-breaking Sight.

Here then is the picture of the whole Church as seen by the eyes of searching flame. There is a mixture of bad and good, active bad, active good, and sleepy indifference. There is a Church within the Church. But the bad is bad enough and big enough to endanger seriously the usefulness of the whole as a light-bearer.

The glass of the lantern is so smoked and cobwebby that it is more useless than useful to the light inside, and the crowd outside in the dark. The uselessness threatens what usefulness is left. Smokiness is contagious. Cobwebs grow thicker and hold more dust.

Two Churches are true and pure in the midst of sore opposition. Two are corrupt in the very worst way. Three, including the leader, are orthodox in form, but indifferent to Jesus Himself,

or asleep, or dead; three degrees of the same thing,—indifference, sleep, death.

In all of these five there are those who, like Ezekiel's companions, "sigh and cry over the abominations that are going on," but they are helpless to stay the sweep of the tide. They are the salt that is saving the lump so far. Even Sodom would have been saved by ten righteous.

It is plainly said to the leader Church that it is no longer of use as a candlestick, except a change come. It fails to give out the light. It is being carried along, patiently borne with *for its own sake*. It is failing at this point in the mission. The smoking flax sending out its irritating smoke in place of clear light is not yet quenched. The Holy Spirit life within is being sorely grieved, but is not yet put entirely out.

And this is only one. Four others are plainly in much worse fix. Five-sevenths are failing. That bit of preservative salt would seem to be working to its full capacity.

This is the picture given us here by our Lord Himself. John would never have dared make such a terrific arraignment of his own accord. It is a picture of the whole Church at the beginning of the First century.

How is it at the beginning of the Twentieth? A thousand million people, two-thirds of the race, pretty freely supplied with the light of western oil and of gunpowder, with the help of the western sewing machine, and with the guidance of western learning and skill, but to whom

with minor exceptions no scant ray of this light has yet gotten, these make answer. That smokiness would seem to be rather dense.

The non-Christian crowds in so-called Christian lands, the overwhelming majority, to whom the name of Jesus has no more practical meaning than other foreign names, Shanghai, or Tokyo, or Calcutta,—these make answer. The light doesn't seem to have been able to get through and out much, even near the candlestick.

The Church itself, when it has sometimes forgotten its statistical tables long enough to look thoughtfully into this old Patmos looking-glass, has now and then made answer, in a few of its thoughtful leaders, while the rank and file push on absorbed in their Ephesian or Sardisian or Thyatiran way.

There's a striking companion bit to this in Ezekiel's vision.[1] That messenger to the exiled colony by the Chebar had first of all the vision of God that completely overwhelmed him. Then he is taken in spirit to Jerusalem, and shown things as they were, through God's eyes. The heathen idols were set up in the very temple of God, so actually stimulating among the people the horribly gross, unnamable impurities connected with their worship. This was done in the open, with no pretence at concealment.

Then in the vision he digs "into the wall" to see the hidden things that are being done. There he sees every sort of creeping, crawling, slimy, repulsive animal pictured on the walls of

[1] Ezekiel viii and ix.

this secret chamber, and the leaders of the people burning incense and worshipping.

This he is told is a picture of *the inner hearts* of the men who are the leaders of the nation. For dramatic intensity it would be hard to equal this. The imaginations of their hearts are as the unclean snakes and beasts that are found only in the damp, unwholesome slime and ooze of swamp and stagnant pond.

And this is God's light-bearing nation to all the earth. And these are the leaders! But there's yet worse. The mothers and wives and daughters of the nation, the real moulders of the nation's life and character, are seen pouring out their very hearts over a heathen idol, with all the horrible evil practices included in its worship. And then a group of men are shown in the holy temple standing with their backs to God and His temple and worshipping the sun.

Under these four items are pointed out the impurity and violence, the injustice and oppression, that mark the people. It is the inner heart life of the nation that is being pictured so vividly. But in the midst of all this are those who are broken-hearted over these conditions. And as the time of judgment comes in the vision these are marked and spared, though they see the work of judgment on every hand.

Such is the tremendous scene depicted by Ezekiel. It will be seen at once what a striking parallel it presents to the scene in this Revelation book with the new light-bearer to the na-

tions of the earth. One would never dare make such an arraignment of his own accord. It is humbling and heart-breaking to the last degree simply to repeat what is spoken here by our Lord Himself.

Clearly the Patmos picture is not only of the Church then, but ever since, and now. And the simple law of momentum in sliding down hill will make it an accurate picture of the Church at the end, the future Church.

The colouring changes at different times in different places, the black getting intenser, pot black, and the light shining out more brightly by contrast. But the picture remains essentially as painted on Patmos.

The warnings so faithfully given run a sliding scale outward and downward in five degrees. If the Church continue as it is, it is told here that it will be rejected as a light-holder. Its privilege and opportunity as God's messenger will be taken away.[1]

Then Christ will fight against it as an enemy,[2] it will be given over to a time of terrible tribulation,[3] it will be treated as prey to be robbed and plundered,[4] and it will be rejected, spewed out of the mouth, as personally disgusting.[5]

Yet in all this plain speech there is no bitterness, only grief, only tender pleading. The plain bluntness is the language of love that yearns to save even yet, and that waits with untold patience hoping for a change.

[1] Rev. ii. 5 [2] Rev. ii. 12-16. [3] Rev. ii. 22, 23.
[4] Rev. iii. 3. [5] Rev. iii. 16.

Wooing Promises.

But it is noticeable that, while the warning is to the corporate Church, the plea and promise that persists throughout is to the individual. He that is *willing* to, let him hear and heed and be controlled by the Spirit's message.

There are two groups that have remained faithful. There are scattered through the other five those who are faithful. And there are no doubt many who feel the pull to be true but are yielding to the strong undertow of the rising tide by which they are being carried.

The coupled promise and plea that call out so pleadingly to these at the close of each message are, "to him that overcometh." This word "overcometh" is very significant. It is one of the characteristic notes of these messages and indeed of this entire book. It is one of that sort of word that sums up a whole situation in itself.

There is opposition. There is conflict because some won't yield to the opposition. And the result of the conflict varies. Some are overcome by the evil; they go over to the enemy, body and soul. Some wabble. They slip along the line of least resistance, secretly holding on to some few ragged remnants of convictions, but not letting these affect their standing or comfort or particularly their profits.

Some overcome evil. There is struggle tense and continued, quickened breath, moist brow,

tightened nerves, the stain of blood, a scar here and there, and heart-breaking experiences. But they fight on, and victory comes. And the evil is less, weakened in its hold on this companion and that neighbour. They get the victory over evil.

There's a wondrous promise to these. It is as though the treasure box is placed at their disposal. It is a seven-fold promise. Every overcomer will receive all that is contained in these seven promises. Note this seven-fold promise: He that overcometh will have everlasting life,[1] and this is emphasized by the reverse statement, "will not be hurt of the second death."[2]

He will be admitted into the sweets of intimate fellowship with his Lord, hidden from all save those in this inner circle. And will receive a new name, the family name, that is an inheritance in the family of God, joint heir with Jesus Christ.[3] He will have the privilege of serving with the King in the blessed Kingdom time coming.

And with this goes the word, "I will give him *the morning star.*"[4] Jesus calls Himself "the bright, the morning star."[5] The morning star rises in the dark of night after midnight and ushers in the new day. He who is in touch of heart with Jesus as the night deepens to the dawn will (probably) have an intimation in his

[1] Rev. ii. 7. [2] Rev. ii. 11. [3] Rev. ii. 17.
[4] Rev. ii. 26-28. [5] Rev. xxii. 16.

inner spirit of the glad coming of the Morning Star that ushers in earth's new day.

The overcomer will be made perfect in character, and find his name not only in the family book, but mentioned by Christ personally to His Father before the angels.[1] He will be admitted into the innermost circle of the King and be reckoned among the dependables.[2] And he will have closest fellowship with Christ in the administration of the wondrous kingdom.[3]

It will be seen that these promises overlap, the same thing being put now positively, now negatively, and being repeated in differing words to different groups. Each promise touches the characteristic trait of the group spoken of. The Ephesians, who had many things but lacked the vital thing, are wooed with the promise of life itself, which is only through touch with Jesus Himself.

Smyrna in its suffering is cheered with the prospect of suffering no more. The Pergamum overcomer is wooed away from intimacy of friendship with evil to intimacy of friendship with the coming King. They who resist the evil Jezebel rule in Thyatira will have the privilege of ruling with the King. Those in Sardis who hunger and thirst after a pure heart will have the longing fully satisfied.

Those who have proven dependable in the trying days in Philadelphia will have the exquisite pleasure of being depended upon in the

[1] Rev. iii. 5. [2] Rev. iii. 12. [3] Rev. iii. 21.

inner circle as wholly trustworthy. Those in Laodicea who resist the current and insist on letting the knocking pilgrim in for heart fellowship[1] will find themselves in fellowship with Him on the throne.

It should be noticed that these promises are one promise, and that that is the promise of everlasting life, of a purified perfected character, and of the privilege of closest fellowship with the King Himself in the coming Kingdom time.

These promises do not take up the matter of rewards for faithfulness in service, such as our Lord speaks of in the twin parables of the pounds and talents. The things promised here are the results of being saved by the blood of Christ. The privilege of fellowship with the King during the Kingdom time is included in salvation. All the redeemed will reign over the earth.[2]

This is significant. Overcoming would seem to be the decisive evidence of faith in Jesus Christ, the faith that receives everlasting life. It takes opposition to let you know whether you are willing to accept Christ. A man does not know whether he really believes Christ until he is opposed in his believing, and opposed to the real hurting point. He has just as much faith in Christ as he is willing to declare, and stand by, and insist upon, *when he is under fire.* Opposition is the fire test. Faith isn't faith unless it can stand the fire test.

[1] Rev. iii. 20, 21, with Jeremiah xiv. 8.

[2] Rev. v. 10.

The Decisive Trait of Faith.

The plain inference here is that he who doesn't overcome shows that he really doesn't believe in his heart. And the natural result is that he does *not* receive these things promised. That is, he is not saved because he won't accept the Lord Jesus as his Saviour *when it comes to the fire test.*

There are without doubt thousands in the Church who will be left behind on the earth when our Lord Jesus catches up His own. This does not mean necessarily that they will be lost. There will be another opportunity of being saved for those living on the earth at that time. The Kingdom will be a wonderful time of salvation. There will be a continuous revival of the realest sort going on everywhere all the time.

But these would not have the blessed privilege of fellowship with the King in the Kingdom, nor the blessedness of fuller resurrection life *at this time.* That is reserved for those who by grace have believed on the Lord Jesus, during His absence and continued rejection, in spite of the fire of opposition.

It is notable that the Thyatiran message speaks of *great tribulation* coming to that Church if it continue unchanged. And that the Philadelphia Church is to be kept through " the hour of trial, that which is to come upon the whole earth." Throughout the Scriptures mention is made of a time of persecution coming at the end. The

common term for it is tribulation. It is called *the great tribulation.* There will be more to be said about this again.

It is possible that it will be found that this Patmos message will have special significance during that trying time at the end. But it should be noted that it fits into the *spirit of opposition* that is *always found* where there is true, faithful witnessing.

The tribulation itself will be the time of intensest opposition carried to the extreme of violent persecution. It will be the climax of conditions always present, wherever there is faithful witnessing. Faithfulness to Christ always arouses opposition.

The test of whether we really accept Christ and believe Him is not in anything we say. It is not even in what we are in our lives when all goes smoothly. It is in what we are in our lives *when opposed,* when it costs criticism, ostracism, petty persecution, or more outright persecution. This is our Lord's test of acceptance of Himself.

We have had many definitions of what it means to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And these have been helpful in clearing the air and helping us to a simple acceptance of Him. These definitions have touched chiefly the *inner* part of faith, the part we are conscious of.

Here is another definition. Here is the last word on the subject, the authoritative word, from our Lord Jesus Himself. It tells what faith is in its outward working, the part the

crowd sees. The faith that accepts Jesus as Saviour accepts Him also as Lord.

That faith naturally rings true to Him under all circumstances. It rings truest and clearest whenever opposition to Him is aroused, whether the opposition of indifference, of criticism and sneer, or of persecution.

There are certain commonly accepted things that are in themselves only good, but which are not *conclusive* evidence that we really have saving faith in the Saviour. The act of coming into Church membership whether by confirmation, by an assent to questions regarding one's personal faith, or by being baptized, the fact of membership in the Church, the partaking of the Lord's supper, serving as an official of the Church in pulpit or pew, faithful attendance, liberal support,—these things are only good.

But they do not furnish conclusive evidence of one's acceptance of Christ. It is quite possible to be carried along on the common current in such things. There is clear evidence that many are. The decisive thing, the test thing is this: *how we stand opposition,* the polite, sneering sort, the more aggressive sort, or—if it come to that—the violent sort. The *fire* reveals every man's faith if there be any there.

There are two fire tests. One is of our faith in Christ, as revealed in the frictional fires of opposition. Whoever stands that test is caught up into His presence when He comes, or goes at once into His presence if our going precede His coming.

The second is of the love-spirit, how far it has been the very breath of our life as revealed by the fire of His presence. For the love-spirit means personal loyalty to Jesus, purity of heart, holiness of life, steadiness of purpose, and the exquisite gentleness of patience in our conduct toward all others.

These words of our Lord Jesus are very searching. This Patmos message must have been a painful one for Him to give John, and painful for John to repeat. It is painful for any one to repeat when its meaning is understood. It should send one off into some quiet corner alone on his knees with that great " search me " prayer of the Psalmist.[1]

Recently I was told a simple incident of one of the truly great Christian men of our generation. He was at the head of one of the largest concerns of our country employing thousands of men, but never knowing any labor troubles. I remember the impression made on me a few years ago at the time of his death, by the remark made to me by two different men of this man's city, men that I think did not know each other, or maybe very slightly. As I spoke of him each man said in a subdued voice, " Oh, everybody in ——— loved Mr. ———! "

This incident was told by his son. The two were on a train together. The father rose and went forward to another part of the train. As he went out a man sitting opposite came over and spoke to the son. His flashy manner of dress

[1] Psalm cxxxix.

and the fact that he seemed to have been drinking suggested the sort of man he was. He said to the son:

"Wasn't that Mr. So-and-so?"

"Yes," the son replied.

"Well," the man said, as though talking half to himself, "if there were more men like him, there'd be fewer like me."

And he turned to his seat and sat as though absorbed in his thought. The son, in speaking of it after his father's death, said it was one of the tenderest memories he had of his father.

The common crowd on the street and our Lord Jesus are united in one thing: they want *more men like Him,* Jesus our Saviour. Then there'd be fewer of the other sort.

V.—AN ADVANCE STEP IN THE ROYAL PROGRAMME

"'We are watching, we are waiting,
For the bright prophetic day;
When the shadows, weary shadows,
From the world shall roll away.

"We are watching, we are waiting,
For the star that brings the day;
When the night of sin shall vanish,
And the shadows melt away.

"We are watching, we are waiting,
For the beauteous King of day;
For the chiefest of ten thousand,
For the Light, the Truth, the Way.

"We are waiting for the morning,
When the beauteous day is dawning,
We are waiting for the morning,
For the golden spires of day." [1]

[1] W. O. Cushing.

AN ADVANCE STEP IN THE ROYAL PROGRAMME

(Revelation, Chapters iv. and v.)

A Look into Heaven.

Heaven is a place of intensest and tenderest interest to every one. It is true that there is less emphasis on getting to heaven as a result of being saved than there was a generation ago. Indeed, no emphasis at all. The whole thought now is about our life here on the earth. We think less about dying and more about living.

This is true. Yet every one of us has loved ones who have slipped from our grasp, and gone from our midst. We think of them. The tenderest memories brood over us, and come like a flood sometimes.

We may have the sweet sense of assurance that these loved ones are saved. But there is an intense longing at times to know more about them, where they are, what they are doing, how much they know of things down here. These thoughts *will* come crowding in upon us.

Now here is some light. *All* the questions are not answered. But there comes clear, sweet light to comfort our hearts during the waiting time until we shall be joined with them again.

We are given here in John's Revelation the first clear, definite glimpse into the upper world. It is told us in the language of earth of course. It must be, else we would not understand. But clearly there is a glory and happiness clear beyond what earthly words can tell.

This is the first glimpse into heaven given us in this old Book of God. Jacob wakes up in his dream and sees a ladder set up connecting earth and heaven, and the angels going up and returning again while God talks with him. It means much to him, but gives us no answer to our questions, except to make plain that there is a very real and wondrous world up there where our loved ones go.

Moses is up in the mount with God for six weeks nearly, twice over, but there is no suggestion of what he may have seen; only the transfiguring change in his face, and the strongly gentling change in his character.

Ezekiel finds the heavens opening and sees the vision, so like John's, of the wondrous Man. Stephen looks up steadfastly into heaven and sees the resplendent glory of God, and the crucified Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Paul is caught up into heaven, not improbably at the time that his body lay bruised and bleeding and apparently lifeless outside Lystra. But the sights he sees and the over-awing glory are too much to be told. But here John is taken up in vision into the heavens, into the presence of God, and sees much, and tells us what he sees.

It was after the vision of the glorified Man and

His message. John is sitting thinking on all he has seen and heard, thinking back to Ephesus and the other Churches he knew so well. He is wondering perhaps *how* he *can* tell them what, whom, he has seen; and wondering too how he can tell them this message entrusted to him.

The holy spell is still strong upon him, when all at once he noticed what looks like a door, a door opened above him in the blue. And as he is looking, astonished, that same voice that had been speaking with him before speaks again. He is bidden to "come up hither," and he will be shown the things that are to happen some time in the future. At once he is conscious of that same gentle, enveloping presence of the Holy Spirit as before. At once He is up in heaven. And he tells us the scene that opens to his eyes.

There is a throne set. What a comfort! There is a *throne*. There is a centre of authority and power to our world. This Revelation is peculiarly the book of a *throne*. Up yonder above the moral tangle and confusion of earth is a reigning throne.

There is One sitting on the throne. That throne is occupied. It has not been vacated. Men down here may push God off the throne of their lives, and try to push Him out of the affairs of the earth. But He sits on the throne above. And that throne dominates the life of the earth. Nothing can be done without permission.

John can't describe this one sitting on the

throne. The sight is too much for his eyes. When the seventy elders of Israel see God, all that they can remember is the dazzle of glory in the wonderful pavement under His feet. It seems like a pavement of precious stones of sapphire, but as clear as crystal. So now all that John can see is some One who seems to his eyes like transparent precious stones blazing with light. This is the only thing he can think of to tell of what he sees.

Rest in the Midst of Unrest.

There is a rainbow around the throne. The radiance of light shining out from this One on the throne makes a rainbow. If one wonders how God can look down on the misery and sin, the rebellion and wretchedness that dominate most of the earth, here is the answer. His finger is never off the pulse. He knows all as we never can. And he feels as we never do the pain of life, and the discord of earth. The unceasing cry of earth comes up in his ears.

But He is controlled by a purpose. It is a purpose of strong patient love. *He has made a promise* that man shall have fullest opportunity unchecked by the natural sweeping judgment, that invariable working out of sin and wrong. That throne keeps the order of nature working smoothly and faithfully for man's sake, holding in restraint the forces that would hinder and destroy. The rainbow is the signature to His promise. That rainbow is always before His

face. That promise has never been forgotten. This explains the quietness of the One on the throne, looking down on the moral confusion of the race.

But this rainbow is not like the common rainbows that we know. It completely encircles the throne. Our rainbows are broken up. They are never seen in their completeness. Our lookout on things sees only a part; it never sees all. It is never complete. The view of things up there is complete. Everything is seen and is seen in its true relation to everything else. The throne is the one place of perfect perspective and poise.

And this rainbow is all of one colour, a clear, soft emerald-green. We know that green is the most restful of all colours. Some colours are irritating. Some persons of very sensitive, nervous temperament are even made sick by certain colours. And we are all affected more than we know in a hurtful way by certain colours. But green is the colour of rest. It soothes the eyes and nerves and even the spirit. The rainbow round about the throne looked like a quiet, quieting emerald-green. The One on the throne is at perfect rest regarding things down here. He knows all. His ears hear all, the cry of distress and despair, the defiance and arrogance and blasphemy. His eyes see His children down here, creative children all of them, prodigal children so many of them, and trusting children walking in the shadows. He sees all. And He feels all with His great feeling heart.

Yet He is at rest. Do you wonder how He

can be? When Jesus saw the multitudes He was moved with compassion; He suffered in heart with them, for they were as shepherdless sheep, torn and distressed. And the heart beating in rhythm with His has as hard a time as He. If He lead you in service to some foreign mission land, you see and know and feel as no tourist party hurried through the outer fringes ever does or can.

And in Christian lands of the West, and the homeland, in slum as in polite circles, in commercial quarters as in the university world, the heart that is in touch with Jesus' heart sees and hears and feels and senses things as they are under the surface or sticking boldly out through the surface. And feels at times as though it can never again be at rest.

How can He, on the throne, be so quiet, and be at rest? And there is an answer to our burning question, a simple, real answer. *He knows the end.* He has a purpose and a plan. The present is only one stage in His great plan. This is man's opportunity, and possibly some one's else opportunity, too. It is to be followed by something else radically different down on this earth.

He is held steady during this time by a great purpose. It is a purpose of great, tender love. To His eye looking sleeplessly down there is rest even as of emerald-green. And so there will be rest for him who looks sleeplessly *up* to the *throne* of control, encircled in the emerald rainbow of perfect peace. And we can be of best

service to Him by resting in our hearts, resting in Him, even while working in the thick of things as they are down here.

They See His Face.

Then John sees twenty-four other thrones round about the central throne. And on these there are twenty-four men sitting. These men are wearing white garments, and have crowns of gold upon their heads. This is the part of intense interest. Who are these? And what does this mean?

What has been said before about picture language, the language of the Orient, of childhood, of the common crowd, the universal language, will help us here. The Bible is an Oriental book. It talks in picture language. This is humanly what gives it such freshness and peculiar adaptation. The radical change of circumstances and speech and mode of thought in different centuries makes all books antiquated after a certain time. This book has the freshness of youth, for in its simple picture language it deals in principles. But picture language must be held to its simplicity. And something of familiarity with the whole range of the Scripture is needful to use the key to the simple picture language.

Let us look a bit at the simple scene here. These men are elders, that is they are leaders. They represent multitudes of others. Throughout the Bible twelve is the number of completeness, both in things and people. A complete

gathering or throng of people is represented by the number twelve. There are twelve tribes of Israel, and so on. This is so familiar that it need only be named without further illustration.

There are two great divisions of this Bible, the Old Testament and the New. These stand naturally for the two great divisions of time, before Christ and after. This division is strongly marked in the Bible, and sharply marked in our Christian consciousness. It has been a common thing to wonder about the salvation and spiritual knowledge and privileges of people who lived before Christ came and died.

Twice twelve make twenty-four. These twenty-four elders represent the redeemed ones from both of these great divisions of time. That is to say, the picture tells us this. All the people from creation's earliest morn up to the present, including the one who went out last from some sorrowing family circle, all who have had the touch of heart with God, are gathered in the presence of Him who sits on the throne. That is one simple thing that stands out clear and sure.

These are represented as *sitting*. The slave or servant never sat in his master's presence. Friends sit together. Angels are never spoken of as sitting in the presence of God. When our Lord Jesus was received up He sat down at the Father's right hand. We are spoken of as seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Sitting together means being on terms of intimacy and fellowship. Through the precious blood of our

Lord Jesus we are all accepted in the Beloved and received and trusted as He is.

These elders are clad in white garments. That is one of the familiar things spoken of much in this end-book. Part of the promise to those of overcoming faith is that they shall be arrayed in white garments, and walk with Christ in white.[1] Those who are faulty in the Church are urged to get white garments.[2] The martyrs waiting their vindication,[3] and the great multitudes who come up out of the tribulation are given white raiment.[4] The bride at the joyous marriage supper, and the armies following the conquering Christ, are clad in fine linen, bright and pure.[5]

We are told that this white linen means a pure life.[6] These garments have been washed in the blood of the Lamb.[7] These multitudes have been cleansed in the blood of Christ and purified by the Holy Spirit and made perfect in purity and holiness as they came up into the presence of the Father on the throne.

These elders are wearing golden crowns. This language, too, is familiar. The acknowledgment and reward of faithfulness and of service is spoken of commonly under this bit of picture talk.[8] The angels are never spoken of as being crowned. Christ was crowned, that is received

[1] Rev. iii. 4-5. [2] Rev. iii. 18. [3] Rev. vi. 11.
[4] Rev. vii. 9. [5] Rev. xix. 8, 14. [6] Rev. xix. 8.
[7] Rev. vii. 14; xxii. 14.
[8] Rev. ii. 10; iii. 11; I Corinthians ix. 25; II Timothy iv. 8; James i. 12; I Peter v. 4.

into the presence of the Father, as the full recognition of His worthiness and of what He had done, and in vindication after the shameful rejection by men.

These men and women and children in the Father's presence have been rewarded and are being rewarded for their faithfulness in obedience and in life. All the struggles and difficulties, the hard road, the endurance, the patient suffering for His name's sake, the faithfulness in doing the allotted tasks, all these have been noted and acknowledged. There is the sweet peace of the Father's approval in all of these before the throne.

Going to School to God.

And these are sitting on *thrones*. When Jesus was teaching His disciples, in the dark days of bitter opposition He wooed them with this: "Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones."[1] And a bit later as they sat round the supper table on the night of His betrayal, when things are getting to the darkest, again He woos them: "Ye may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom; and ye shall sit on thrones."[2] He that overcometh is assured of sitting with Christ on His throne.[3]

All the redeemed ones of earth are to have part with Christ in the coming Kingdom time. They reign with Him.[4] During this present time the countless hosts of angels have a part in min-

[1] Matthew xix. 28.
[2] Rev. iii. 21.
[3] Luke xxii. 30.
[4] Rev. v. 10; xx. 4, 6.

istering to man on the earth.[1] Even so during the Kingdom time to come the countless hosts of the redeemed will have the sweet privilege of service with Christ and on behalf of those on the earth. And it is quite possible that they already have a part in such a ministry.

A little farther in the description it is seen that these elders have "each one a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints." Heaven is a place of wonderful music. Its very atmosphere must be tuned to the rarest rhythmic harmonies. And each one has part in the music being made.

And yet more, they are continuing the sweet ministry of intercession learned down on earth. This means that they are in touch with earth. They know the needs of loved ones and of all, and they have the privilege of fellowship in this with Him who ever liveth to make intercession.

And there is one other thing we know here at once without being told. If a friend tells me that he has a rose garden under the care of a skilled gardener, I know without being told that the roses are growing. I at once look through my friend's words and see bushes full of roses of all colours, some full blown, some half blown, some bursting buds, and some just budding. For there is a garden, and a gardener, and sun and rain and dew. I know there must be growth and beauty.

[1] Hebrews i. 14 with Daniel vii. 10 and Psalm ciii. 20-21.

Even so we know that the loved ones who have parted from us are growing. They are in the Father's presence, in intimate fellowship. That tells me of their growth. That little one who slipped away so young, years ago, has been growing in mental powers, in character as well as in what down here we call stature, and growing most of all in love. And so at the meeting time, in the air or up there, there will be instant recognition, as well as instant delight over the growth under such wondrous tutorage.

This is the glimpse into the upper world which John sees and is allowed to give us here. The redeemed ones of earth of all the ages are in the presence of the Father and of the Lord Jesus and of the angels, on terms of intimate fellowship, made pure and perfect in character, but always growing from more to more, and having a share in blessed ministry. And they listen to and have share in making music more exquisite than our earthly language can describe.

They understand the wondrous plans for the earth, for now they see all things through the Lord Jesus' eyes. They have some part without doubt in welcoming those who come to join them, even as they will have part in receiving those who are caught up at our Lord's return. And they look forward eagerly to the glad time of righting that will come then.

But let us look a bit more at what John sees. Out of the throne are seen proceeding lightnings and voices and thunders. Three other times in

this book it speaks of lightning and voices and thunder.[1] These things of course are the familiar accompaniments of a storm. It is noticeable that each other time they are named in the book it is in connection with some direct action being taken by God in the affairs of the earth. And each time there is some added item intensifying the scene.

A physical storm is caused by two areas of unequal temperature coming together. The storm is the process of coming together and equalizing of the atmospheric conditions. The inference here would seem to be that the time of action has come to straighten out matters on the earth. The two moral atmospheres of heaven and earth seem to be coming into contact, and a storm is resulting before clear weather comes. It suggests that our Lord Jesus is taking the next direct step in His broader plan.

God's Ideal of Creation.

But let us look a little further. In the book's picture language there are "seven lamps of fire burning before the throne." These we are plainly told "are the seven spirits of God." That is a Hebrew way of saying "the perfect spirit of God." This is of intense interest. The Holy Spirit is represented as being before the throne.

In the confidential talk with the inner group of disciples on the betrayal night, in John's Gospel,[2]

[1] Rev. viii. 5; xi. 19; xvi. 18, 21.
[2] John xiv.-xvi.

Jesus promises that when He has ascended up to the Father He will send down the Holy Spirit to them. When the Spirit has come down to the disciples He will begin a new ministry of witnessing to the world through them.

In the Book of Acts that promise is fulfilled. The Spirit comes down with remarkable manifestations on the day of Pentecost. The distinctive thing He does is to take possession of a group of men and form them into a new witnessing body called the Church. He had dwelt in the nation of Israel as a nation, and had been withdrawn from that nation when it proved finally faithless to its mission. He had dwelt in individual men before and during and after that time.

At Pentecost He is sent down on a new mission. He is to do in men all that Jesus has done for them in His life and death and resurrection. But the distinctive thing of Pentecost is His forming this new body called the Church, through which He begins a new ministry of witnessing to the world.

All through the Acts and Epistles He is constantly spoken of as here on the earth working in the Church and through it. He in the Church is a powerful restraint upon the powers of evil in the world. In Thessalonians,[1] Paul has spoken of a day coming when that restraint would be withdrawn. The Holy Spirit, the "One that restraineth now," is to be taken away.

Now here the Holy Spirit is represented as

[1] II Thessalonians ii. 6-7.

being, not in the Church, as always in the Acts and Epistles, but as being "before the throne." This is the second significant thing to note in this scene. This also would seem to suggest the beginning of a new order of things.

John goes quietly on with his description. Before the throne he sees a great expanse that looks like a sea of clear, bright, beautiful crystal. Before the throne and around about the throne are four living creatures or creatures of life. These living creatures are of intensest interest. They appear throughout the Scriptures from the Garden of Eden in Genesis to the very close of this Book of Revelation.

They are also called cherubim and seraphim, that is, cherubs and seraphs. They are always associated directly with the immediate presence of God,[1] and with His presence-chamber, in the tabernacle,[2] in the temple,[3] and in Ezekiel's vision of a new temple,[4] and in the thought of the people.[5] There is one possible exception to this, where they are seen at the entrance to the Garden of Eden.[6] The description of them is most full in Ezekiel. It varies in details, but with the essentials always the same.

[1] Ezekiel i. 4-28; x. 1-22.

[2] Exodus xxv. 17-22; xxxvii. 6-9.

[3] I Kings vi. 23-26; viii. 6-7; II Chronicles iii. 10-14; v. 7-8.

[4] Ezekiel xli. 15-26.

[5] I Samuel iv. 4; II Samuel vi. 2; xxii. 11; I Chronicles xiii. 6; Psalm xviii. 10; lxxx. 1; xcix. 1; Isaiah vi. 1-3; xxxvii. 16.

[6] Genesis iii. 24.

The general appearance is that of a man, but there are four faces as of a man, a lion, an ox or calf, a flying eagle, and sometimes a cherub face. They are full of eyes everywhere, and they seem enveloped in the pure fire which everywhere is associated with God's own presence. These descriptions combined suggest perfection of purity, of intelligence, of obedience, and of power.

In this book of the Revelation they are spoken of seven times,[1] that is, more frequently than in any other book, though not so fully as in Ezekiel. Five times they are leading or joining in the worship of God, by men and angels, and twice they are coöperating with the Lamb or the angels in what is being done on the earth.

These beautiful, intelligent beings seem to represent the whole animate creation, man, the animals intimately associated in service with man, those that roam at will, and the birds, and the angels. It would seem as though they stand for *God's ideal of creation,* as it was before the hurt of sin came, as He holds it in His heart, and as it will be after sin has gone. His ideal of a perfect and perfected creation is always in His presence and before His face, intelligently and gladly carrying out His will, reverently and joyously sounding His praise.

It suggests that He will not rest content until His ideal for the creation shall be a sweet, full realization, all sin and rebellion removed and

[1] iv. 6-9; v. 6, 8, 14; vi. 1, 3, 5, 7; vii. 11; xiv. 3; xv. 7; xix. 4.

all His works uniting in joyous, continuous worship, and glad, harmonious obedience.

The Significant Book.

All this is interesting; some of it intense in interest. But it is only a setting. It is incidental. The chief thing is yet to be told. John had been told that he would be shown the things that would come to pass some time in the future. We come now to the beginnings of these "things."

The One who is sitting on the throne has a carefully sealed book or document in his hand. An angel calls out loudly for any one who is qualified to do so to step forward and take the document and break its seals. And as John watches intently no one comes forward. No one can be found, either in the heaven, in earth, or in the region spoken of as under the earth.

At this John is greatly distressed, and weeps much, so he must have understood at once just what this meant. And one of the elders comforts him with the assurance that there is One who has "*overcome* to open the book, and the seven seals thereof," "the lion of the tribe of Judah." This word "overcome" suggests that this one has been in some great conflict and has gotten the victory and overcome all opposition. And this qualifies Him to take and open the document. He is the only one among untold numbers so qualified.

And now John sees this One. He is standing

in the very midst of the throne surrounded by creatures and elders. We easily recognize this as our Lord Jesus. He is a lion in leadership and strength. He is a lamb in gentleness of character, and in the sacrificial experience He has been through. The marks of death are plainly seen on His person.

As He comes forward He reaches and takes the book out of the hand of the One on the throne. He is allowed to take it. His qualification to take the document and break its seals is acceptable to the One on the throne.

And as He takes the book there is a remarkable burst of praise and adoration that must have made all heaven ring. And those on earth in touch of spirit with the scene and its purpose and the Chief Actor would surely feel some thrill in the spirit currents of earth.

The outburst of worship is led by the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders who fall down before the Lamb and sing a song. What music that must be when the untold thousands sing as only redeemed ones can sing. Then countless hosts of angels join in and lift the chorus. And then there is the creation chorus, every created thing in heaven and earth, under the earth, in the sea, absolutely everything seems to join in this indescribable music. And the four living creatures say, "Amen." And again the elders fall down and worship.

John's distress at the beginning, and now this indescribable outburst of praise, tell us that this is something thrilling and significant beyond ex-

pression. What does this mean, our Lord Jesus taking the sealed document preparatory to breaking its seals?

It has been said in a previous talk that every thread woven into the fabric of the Old Testament can be found in the fabric of this Revelation book. So that if one goes to work patiently he can trace every allusion here to something back in these older leaves. This gives us the clue to the significance of this remarkable scene.

That clue seems in this case to be found in the book of Jeremiah, chapter thirty-two. There is found an allusion to a simple primitive custom of the Hebrew people in the exchange of real estate and in taking possession of property to which one is entitled.

The old Hebrew custom seems to have been as follows: When property was purchased the deed to the new owner was made out in duplicate, an open copy and a sealed copy. The open copy was clearly for public information, open to all. The sealed copy as clearly belonged only to the owner of the property as his evidence of ownership. So it identified him as the one named in the open copy.

If a new heir comes to take possession of an estate, or in case of a dispute over ownership, the claimant who was adjudged the rightful heir or owner would be given the possession of the sealed document or deed. And as so attested by the judge or court, he only would be properly qualified to "take" the sealed roll, break its

seals, read its contents, and so formally take possession of the estate, or property.

Now under the symbolism of this old bit of Hebrew custom, our Lord Jesus is represented here as stepping forward to take possession of the earth, and begin His reign over it. A Hebrew immersed in the old primitive customs of his people in Palestine would understand this allusion at once, however startled or sceptical he might be as to its significance in this connection.

Taking Possession.

The language used in the song of praise when our Lord Jesus takes the sealed book is significant. They say, "thou art *worthy,*" that is, thou art *qualified;* thou art the duly attested one with the right to take possession. "For thou wast *slain,* and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe," and so on.

Man had been given the dominion of the earth. He had by obedience to the evil one transferred his right to Him who is repeatedly called "the prince of this world." Our Lord Jesus *purchased* men out of their slavery back to their original Lord,—with all that was rightfully theirs. He has allowed fullest opportunity for all who will to accept His Lordship. Now He is about to take possession of the earth on behalf of men, and for them.

This is the tremendous significance of what John is shown here as something that will take place hereafter. In the scene of the candlesticks

He is patiently waiting, holding Himself in restraint. Now the waiting time is over. He is making the next move in His broader plan for the earth.

There is no hint as to the length of interval between the two scenes, how long He will wait. There is no suggestion as to when this next move will be made. But we are here plainly told that at some time that candlestick waiting time will end, and He will take a forward step in connection with His plans for the earth. And it should be keenly noticed that what follows now in this book of Revelation is the run of events that will immediately follow that next step of His.

Yet this step is taken up *in heaven*. The first action of the new move will be there. There will be nothing to be seen on the earth to indicate the change. Things there will go on as before, eating and drinking, buying and selling, marrying and giving in marriage, all unconscious of the tremendous events being worked out.

But now the waiting time still waits. Our opportunity is still open. If we might only be simple enough to be true to our absent Lord Jesus during this waiting time.

A bishop of the American Episcopal Church, widely known for his saintly character, his culture, and long years of tireless service, was visiting in the South. In the town there lived a judge of wide repute for his scholarly learning as well as for his culture and uprightness. Now he was seriously ill, and had requested an interview with the bishop.

He asked the bishop to talk to him about personal religion. And the clergyman talked to this thoughtful, scholarly judge in choice philosophical language about the fatherhood of God, the character of Christ, and the essential harmony of man's true nature with God. The judge listened attentively for some time.

Then he apologetically interrupted his visitor, and said:

"Bishop, I'm dying. Won't you please talk to me just like you'd talk to my black boy, Jim?"

And the bishop could, and did. He told him in simplest talk that he was a sinner. Jesus died to save sinners. His blood washes away our sins. We must take Christ as a Saviour, just trust Him, as simply as a child trusts its mother.

So he talked. And the judge listened. And the tears came, and the peace. He came as a child, and trusted, and he knew the peace that passeth understanding. It was the simple telling of the simple story of the Saviour who died, and the simple, child-like acceptance of that Saviour. The scholarly bishop helped the learned judge best, in the crisis of his life, by talking as simply as to a child.

If we might only be simple enough to be true to this Jesus who died, during the remnant of waiting time that remains.

VI.—A CLEARING-UP STORM IN THE REALM

"God Almighty! King of nations! earth Thy footstool,
heaven Thy throne!
Thine the greatness, power, and glory, Thine the
kingdom, Lord, alone!
Life and death are in Thy keeping, and Thy will
ordaineth all:
From the armies of Thy heavens to an unseen in-
sect's fall.

"Reigning, guiding, all-commanding, ruling myriad
worlds of light;
Now exalting, now abasing, none can stay Thy hand
of might!
Working all things by Thy power, by the counsel
of Thy will.
Thou art God! enough to know it, and to hear Thy
word: 'Be still!'

"In Thy sovereignty rejoicing, we Thy children bow
and praise,
For we know that kind and loving, just and true,
are all Thy ways.
While Thy heart of sovereign mercy, and Thy arm
of sovereign might,
For our great and strong salvation in Thy sovereign
grace unite."

—Frances Ridley Havergal.

A CLEARING-UP STORM IN THE REALM

(Revelation, Chapters vi.-viii.)

The Area of the Storm.

Goodness arouses evil. Faithfulness to Christ stirs opposition. This is a commonplace. A piece of white-hot metal plunged into cold water makes a great fuss. Two areas of sharply different temperatures in the atmosphere above us coming suddenly together make a storm.

Purity entering an atmosphere of impurity and insisting on staying, and on keeping pure, creates a lively disturbance. The tempter was aroused to his subtlest effort when Jesus appeared. There is no such demoniac activity recorded as when Jesus walked among men.

So crowning a king arouses opposition, if there be opposition. And the active taking of the reins of government has intensified the opposition when it was strong enough to make a stand. The striking illustration of this in the Bible is King David. After Saul's death the men of Judah anointed David king. That was the signal for an immediate attack by the chief of the forces of Saul's house. And this was succeeded by a long war, before David was acknowledged as

king over all Israel. The clearing-up storm in his realm lasted a good while before good weather came.

Here in this Revelation scene we have been looking at our Lord Jesus is represented as stepping forward to take possession of His realm. It is natural to expect a storm. This will be a signal to the opposition to rally all its power. But there can be no question about the outcome of such a set-to. That storm proves to be a clearing-up storm in the realm. It is to be followed by such fine moral weather as has not been known before. But the storm itself proves to be a terrific one for the earth while it lasts.

The greater part of this little end-book is taken up with a description of that storm. But before we turn to this book itself and its storm, we want to get our bearings a bit, so as to understand better what is here. Revelation is the knot in the end of a big bunch of threads. We shall understand the knot better by knowing more about the threads before they are tied into the knot.

The storm area proves to be very large. It takes in the whole earth. The Bible is a big book in its outlook and grasp. It deals with the whole earth, and the whole race. The thoughtful Bible student comes to have a broad outlook, as well as a close lookout about his own front and back doors.

It is fascinating to study the geography of the Bible. We talk about the world growing smaller. That refers of course to the rapidity of transit.

It is only within a few hundred years that we have learned of the earth being round. The Bible map includes practically the whole world as we have come to know it.

The centre of the world as seen on this map may seem a little surprising. We Americans *feel* that the centre of things is here. The Englishman *knows* that it is in London; and lately the Germans have had the same exclusive sort of knowledge about Berlin. The Chinese has long called his country "the Middle Kingdom," in the sense of its being the central kingdom about which the rest of the world revolves. But here the centre is seen to be on the boundary line, practically, between Orient and Occident, reaching out an embracing arm to each.

We have a broad division of the earth into East and West. The differences between the two, in civilization, mode of thought, religion, language, and so on, are so radical as to make it seem that there was no point of contact. At least this has been emphasized much by western writers on the East. We are disturbed just now here in the far West over the Oriental, Chinese Japanese and Indian crossing the *far* boundary line between Orient and Occident and coming into the United States and Canada.

Yet East and West have always overlapped at the *middle* boundary line. There is a great mixture of races in the strip where the eastern edge of the West and the western edge of the East come together. It is the strip running roughly north and south where Russia's west-

ern border and Turkey's touch Germany and Austria and Greece, including the never-at-rest Balkan Peninsula. Constantinople sits on the dividing line between East and West, with the worst of both civilizations within her confines. Here the hemispheres touch and their life currents intermingle and flow together.

Scientific research seems to find good evidence that all our European civilization, which of course means American too, may have been brought over by Eastern immigrants from central Asia long ages ago, Asia coming into Europe. Perhaps we Westerners would not despise the Easterners so contemptuously and patronizingly if we knew how much we are probably indebted to them for our civilization as well as for our Hebrew and Christian faith, our Bible, and the Christian restraining bulwarks of our common life.

The old common point of contact between Orient and Occident was the strip of land forming the western edge of the Orient at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Palestine has been for centuries the common roadway of all nations, East and West. No bit of earth has been so tramped and trampled by the feet of all nations and races. This has been the battlefield of the nations through long centuries. The ends of the earth have met here. It is interesting that the waters that wash its western shore are called the Mediterranean Sea, that is, the *middle-of-the-earth* sea.

Here then is the centre of the map. It is the

centre of all things in the Bible. And it has proven to be at the centre of human action through history, attested by the very name given to the chief body of water there.

Jerusalem, the capital city of this Palestine strip, was the centre of a world power in the early ages. It has been the world capital. And it has in turn been fought over and conquered by every world power. No city has been a world centre of action during as long a stretch of time, and to as many different nations.

Out from this centre the action of the Bible reaches north to Russia, south to Africa (Ethiopia), east to China (Sinim, Isaiah xlix. 12), and west to Spain. That practically includes the world of our day. America is of course merely a transplanted seedling of Europe.

Those great Hebrew leaders called prophets had a world outlook. They were world messengers. It is intensely interesting to take a piece of paper, and pencil a rough map of the nations named in their messages, notably Isaiah,[1] Jeremiah,[2] Ezekiel,[3] and Daniel.[4] Beginning at Jerusalem and Israel they reach first this way, then that, up and down, back and forth, until the whole world of action of that day has been touched. They were men of world size. They had a world outlook and a world message.

But then God's man always has. The world outlook of Jesus was tremendous. And every

[1] Isaiah xiii.-xxiv. [2] Jeremiah xlvi.-li.
[3] Ezekiel xxv.-xxxii., xxxviii.-xxxix.
[4] Daniel, throughout, notably vii.-xii.

true disciple of Jesus Christ has the world outlook. Grace broadens as well as refining. It is one of the endless outworkings of sin that tends toward that narrowing provincialism which everywhere hinders so much, and so intensely.

Now in this world map in the Bible geography two cities stand out beyond all others, Jerusalem and Babylon; Jerusalem the centre of God's people and of God's plans, Babylon the centre of the opposing worldly power. These are the two outstanding cities of the Bible world.

Between these two there is an enmity and warfare that is practically continuous. Jerusalem comes to be the typical of God's people and power and kingdom. Babylon stands out likewise as typical of the power and kingdom always and innately opposed to God and to His people. The conflict between the two seems irrepressible and irreconcilable. It is never out of view.

Babylon has been the centre, under successive dynasties, of a world empire, including not only part of Asia, but reaching west to Europe and south to Africa. It sat practically in the connecting strip of Orient and Occident, ruling over both. In the dim dawn of history a God-ignoring, and so really a God-defying and man-exalting movement, centred in the city called Babel. And from that time on that city, and its successor Babylon, have seemed as though possessed with a spirit of antagonism to God and His people. It is as though it were the

earthly headquarters of the blasphemous unseen evil forces.

This is a simple bit of geography lesson in the Old Testament. This is the map that lies ever open in these older pages, with its two capital cities marked large. And this indicates the area of the storm, and the two central points where its outburst will centre.

Studying the Weather Forecast.

It is interesting to find a weather forecast of this storm. The old Hebrew prophets were close students of national and world-wide weather conditions, and much given to making forecasts of impending storms. Even in the New Testament there is this distinct prophetic or foretelling strain running throughout. The father of John the Baptist is told of his son's birth; and Mary, of the unusual birth of her divine Son. The disciples are told of the coming of the Holy Spirit. And Agabus tells of a great famine coming. In these instances the fulfilment follows soon after the event is foretold.

The destruction of Jerusalem, foretold by Christ, had at least a part of its fulfilment in the terrible Titus siege of 70 A.D. Our Lord said that He would return to earth in great glory, and that there would come a great tribulation to all the earth, and repeated the old prophecy of a restoration of the Hebrew kingdom. These have not yet occurred.

But the book of the Revelation is distinctively the prophetic book of the New Testament. It deals almost entirely with events that are yet to come. It would be natural that it would fit into the prophetic parts of the Old Testament. So that one who is somewhat familiar with the prophetic books of the Old naturally comes more intelligently to this prophetic book of the New.

It is true that most of us have a sense of bewilderment about prophecy. We seem to feel that it requires great scholarship and profound study, and that an understanding of it is not possible to the common run of Christians. And so we largely leave it out as not understandable.

Yet prophecy is simply God's plans for the future, together with a revelation of other events which are not in His plan, but which He sees will happen in the future. In it He tells us what He means us to understand. And more than this, our understanding will have practical bearing on our attitude toward evil and compromise. It will affect our faith, making it steadier, especially when evil seems triumphant and overbearing. It will make our prayer more intelligent and confident.

There are certain things we all know. As we read back into these pages we know that the break-up of the Jewish nation, which began with the Babylonian Captivity, came to a terrible climax in a complete break-up after the rejection of Christ. We know that the other nations commonly called Gentiles (*i.e.*, the nations) have had supremacy in the earth. Israel was at one

time acknowledged as the great world power, with many subject nations, in Solomon's time.

But Gentile supremacy begins back in the time of these Old Testament pages. There is to-day practically no belief that this will ever be changed, except perhaps by a stray Jew here and there, who still holds to his old Bible, and except by those Christians who discern God's plan, and believe both in Him and in it.

In the absence of an understanding of that plan of God, it has been common to apply all the glowing prophetic Hebrew promises to the Church. The result has been that Israel and the Kingdom have been confused in our minds with the Church. And this has become the commonplace in the common Church consciousness.

It is quite possible for the person of average good sense to get something of a simple, broad grasp of the prophetic books. It involves reading *repeatedly* so as to get familiar with the contents, and *rapidly* so as not to get too much absorbed in details.

It is needful to use a common-sense interpretation in getting at the meaning. It is a simple law that one principle of interpretation should be applied uniformly and consistently to all parts of any one document. If I say arbitrarily, "this part is rhetorical; it doesn't mean just what it says, but something else; and this *other* part means just what it says," clearly I am reading my own ideas and prejudices into the book.

It is much slower, and takes more pains and patience, to keep at it until all parts gradually

clear up to us, first this bit, then that, until part fits part, and all hang together. But there is great fascination in it, and one's reverence for this revelation of God's Word grows deeper.

Of course there is rhetorical language here as everywhere. "The Lord is my shepherd" is clearly rhetorical. For God is not a shepherd, and I am not a sheep, but a man. But under this simple, clearly rhetorical language the tender, personal relationship God bears to me is beautifully expressed. That such language *is* rhetorical is clear to every mind alike.

And there is a picture language here, such as speaking of purity of character as "white garments." The honest, earnest, unprejudiced seeker after truth quickly recognizes these, and learns to become skilled in discerning what is meant. We come to see that Israel means Israel, not the Church. Jerusalem means that city in Judea, and so on.

Of course it is needful that there be an *open-mindedness,* a *humble, teachable spirit,* willing to accept the real truth, no matter how it may shake up one's prejudices and prearranged schemes of thought. And, above all, there should be a constant *prayerfulness* of spirit, to learn just what our God is seeking to have us know. Of course there are depths here for the scholarly, profound minds. But we ordinary folk can get a simple, clear grasp of God's plan and revealed insight into the future if we go at it in this thoughtful, prayerful way. And it will be a great help to us to do so.

Three Great Unfulfilled Events.

Let us take a swift glance at these prophetic books of the Old Testament. It helps to remember the natural way in which these prophetic books grew up. These prophets were preachers and teachers. Here are some people going up to the temple service one day in Jerusalem. As they get near the temple they notice a little knot of people standing yonder at a corner listening to a man talking earnestly. Isaiah, fresh from the presence of God, is talking out of a burning heart to the crowd.

A visitor from another part of the land says curiously to his companion, "What's that?" The other replies: "Oh, it's only Isaiah talking to the people. He is a good man, that Isaiah, a well-meaning, earnest man, but a little too intense, I fear." And they pass on to the temple service. By and by Isaiah stops. The moving congregation scatters. He slips quietly down to his house, and under the Spirit's holy, brooding presence writes down a part of what he has been saying. So there grew up the rolls to which his name is attached.

In some such simple, natural way these prophetic books grew up, always under the Holy Spirit's guidance and control. They are full of intense fire, and of the homely talk of street and market and fireside. There are two sorts of these prophets, the preachers like Elijah and Elisha and those who wrote as well as

spoke, and whose names are preserved in these books.

There are seventeen of these little books. They fall easily into four groups. The *first group* contains those belonging in the time before the nation was exiled. It is a period of about one hundred and fifty years, roughly, beginning in the prosperous reign of Uzziah and running up to the time when the nation was taken captive to Babylon. Isaiah is the most prominent prophet of this period, and with him are Hosea, Micah, and Amos, all of whom may have been personally acquainted; and also Zephaniah and Habakkuk.

The *second* is *the exile group*, Jeremiah preaching in Judah, before and during the siege, and to the remnant left behind in the land; and Ezekiel and Daniel bearing their witness among the exiles in the foreign land.

The *third group* is made up of those who witnessed after the people are allowed to return to their own land again. The writer of the second part of Isaiah probably preached to the people as the opportunity came to return to Jerusalem.[1] Haggai and Zachariah stirred up

[1] The book of Isaiah falls naturally into two parts, chapters i.-xl., and xli.-lxvi. The historical allusions in each make it quite clear that these two parts belong in two periods far apart. One hundred and eighty years intervene between the close of the time stated in Isaiah's first chapter as the period of his ministry and the beginning of the return from exile into which the second part fits.

But the full inspiration of the second part is in

the returned people to rebuild the temple. Joel and Malachi witnessed probably a little later in the same period.

The *fourth* is the *foreign group*. Obadiah sends a message to the neighbouring nation of Edom; and Jonah and Nahum are sent with messages to Nineveh. If one will try to make a picture of these people and events by reading the historical books, and then watch and listen as the prophets talk, it will do much to make these prophetic books full of the native atmosphere in which they grew up.

Now there are three things that gradually come to stand out in these prophetic books. Much of what is being said is of immediate application. It refers plainly to affairs being lived out then. Then certain things are plainly fulfilled in the coming of Christ. And again there is a great deal that clearly has never been fulfilled but is still future. It is the latter part that naturally is of intensest interest.

Now in this latter part, dealing with the future, *three things* stand out clear and sharp above the rest. There is to be judgment upon Israel for their iniquities. The changes on this are rung again and again. And this stands out as much in the preaching of the Captivity time, and of the Return, as before the Captivity. But in the midst of severest judgment there will be

no wise affected. This rarely Spirit-controlled man modestly or unconsciously withholds his name from his writings. And they are grouped by the old Hebrew compilers with those of Isaiah.

a *remnant spared*. The tree is cut down, but the stump is spared; and there is life in the stump. But above these there stand out these three things.

The first thing stands out big. It is the thing the nation never forgot. The believing Hebrew still clings to it. The wailers at the wall of Jerusalem to-day never forget it. It is this: there is to be a *future time of great glory for the nation of Israel in their own loved land*.[1] The kingdom is to be restored, but with a glory indescribably greater than ever known. This is the bright golden thread, thick and strong, running through from end to end.

It will come through that spared remnant. The old stump will put out a new shoot. It will be through the coming of a great king, who will prove to be their greatest king,[2] and will reign not only over Israel, but over all nations as tributary to Israel, with Jerusalem as the capital city both of Israel and of the whole earth.[3] At its beginning there will be a gathering of Israel from among all the nations where they have been scattered.[4] To assist these scattered pilgrims to get to their own land, the tongue of the Egyptian sea on the southwest is to be destroyed; and the waters of the Euphrates on the extreme east are to be so scattered or dried up that men can walk over dry-shod.

When the great king comes there will be genuine penitence among the people over their

[1] Isaiah ii. 2-4.
[2] Isaiah xi. 1-9; xxxii. 1-6.
[3] Micah iv. 1-8.
[4] Isaiah xi. 11-16; xxvii. 12-13.

past sins,[1] and they will become a wholly changed people.[2] Israel will be a nation converted by the power of the Holy Spirit through the conversion of the people individually. There will be at this time a resurrection of God's people who have died.[3]

The new reign and kingdom is to be one of great spiritual enlightenment to all nations.[4] There will be everywhere a new, remarkable openmindedness to God and His truth.[5] And there will be the same visible evidence of the presence of God at Jerusalem as when the pillar of fire and cloud was with them in the wilderness. That wondrous presence-cloud is to be always in view.[6]

This sounds to our ears like the highly coloured visionary dream of some over-enthusiastic Hebrew. Yet this is a calm statement of what is found here. And be it keenly marked, it is a picture which the godly Hebrew of the old time never lost sight of. *This is the first thing* that stands out in these prophetic pages.

The second thing stands out distinctly. Preceding this wondrous kingdom *the earth will be visited by terrible judgments.*[7] There is an awfully dark shadow before the blaze of light breaks out. A terrific storm will come before the sun shines out in its new strength. All

[1] Zechariah xii. 10-14.
[2] Jeremiah xxxi. 8-19, 33, 34.
[3] Isaiah xxvi. 19; Daniel xii. 2.
[4] Micah iv. 1-2. [5] Isaiah xxv. 7. [6] Isaiah iv. 2-5.
[7] Isaiah xxiv. 1-13, 17-20; ii. 12-19; Micah vii. 15-17.

nations will combine to make war against the Jew. Their forces will be gathered at Jerusalem.[1] At the head of the coalition will be a power called Babylon.[2] There will come a terrific battle, victory for the coalition will seem assured. The sufferings of the Jews will be indescribable.

Then there will come a day never after to be forgotten. In the midst of the indescribable horrors of that battle, when things are at their worst for the Jew, then comes the deliverance. Suddenly Jehovah will appear out of the heavens, with a great company of holy ones. His feet will stand upon Mount Olivet to the east of Jerusalem. There will be a terrible earthquake, and an equally terrific shake-up of the heavenly bodies. The luminaries, sun, moon, and stars, will be darkened.[3] There will be terrible judgments visited not only upon the earth, but upon the evil spirit powers.[4] Repeated emphasis is put upon the judgment to be visited upon Babylon.

All this will sound like a veritable fairy tale to many who are not familiar with this Book of God; the unlikeliest thing imaginable. Yet this is the thing seriously set forth throughout these old prophetic pages. I have given a few references in footnotes. But these few scattered passages of themselves will not give an adequate conception of what these pages hold.

[1] Zechariah xii. 1-9; xiv. 1-2.
[2] Zechariah xiv. 1-8.
[3] Isaiah xiii. 1-13.
[4] Isaiah xxiv. 21-22; xxvii. 1.

There is all the fascination of a novel, and immensely more and deeper fascination than any novel, in reading these prophetic pages repeatedly in the way already spoken of till their mere contents become somewhat familiar. Then taking paper and pencil, running through again, and drawing off patiently and carefully, item after item of these prophecies plainly not yet fulfilled, and then slowly and painstakingly put them together in what would be a simple, logical order.

It will be helpful, in reading, to remember that it is a common thing with these writers to speak of a future thing as already past. It is a bit of the intensity that sees the thing that is yet to come as already accomplished. And one should discern between the immediate thing that may likely occur in that generation and the far-distant thing. A careful noting of the language will make the difference clear.

This is the second thing that stands out, the visitation of judgments.

Then there is *a third thing.* This terrible visitation of judgments comes in connection with, and at the close of, *a time of great persecution of the Jew* by the nations. Jeremiah speaks of it as the time of Jacob's trouble,[1] and the Man of Fire tells Daniel that there will be a time of trouble *such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time.*[2] This persecution of the Jew, and the visitation of judgments on the earth as a deliverance from it,

[1] Jeremiah xxx. 7-8. [2] Daniel xii. 1.

are connected with the setting up of the Kingdom.

These are the three things that stand dominantly out in these prophetic pages as distinctly future, the great Jew persecution unprecedented in intensity, the visitation of terrible judgments on the earth, and the coming of a glorious kingdom. And the three are connected. We know that no events have yet taken place that at all satisfy the language used of these three connected events.

This is the simple outline of expected coming events with which the thoughtful reader of God's Word is supposed to be familiar. The reverent student of God's promises and plans and revelations would naturally have all this clear and fresh in his mind as he turns to open the pages of the prophetic book of the New Testament.

Forecast of the Great Storm.

Now it is *of intense interest* to note that our Lord Jesus speaks of these same three things, at much length, and with much emphasis; the persecution, the visitation of judgments, and the kingdom. It came to me as a great surprise and with startling force when I realized, after gathering out this summary from the Old Testament, that the three things that stand out so sharply there are the very things Jesus speaks of here with such fulness and emphasis.

He puts special emphasis on the time of persecution as of unprecedented horror and ferocity.

He plainly indicates that this will be directed not only against the Jew, but against His own followers. Three times this talk of His on Olivet just before His death is given at much length.[1] That talk is given to a little group of Jewish disciples who have broken with the Jewish leaders, and who become the great leaders of the Church formed at Pentecost.

He speaks of that terrible experience as "great tribulation,"[2] "such as there hath not been the like from the beginning of the creation which God created until now, nor ever shall be."[3] We shall find it spoken of in this book of Revelation as "the tribulation, the great one."[4] It has come to be spoken of commonly as "the tribulation" and "the great tribulation."

With all this fresh in mind, a run back through the Old Testament brings out that it is spoken of there much more than we may have realized. The warning to Israel, at Sinai, as they made the covenant of allegiance with God, of the bitter punishment that would come if they were untrue, has seemed many times as though couched in very intense, almost extreme language.[5] But it is found to fit into these later descriptions of this great tribulation to come. That warning is repeated, in as intense words and with a greater fulness, by Moses in his series of farewell talks

[1] Matthew xxiv.-xxv; Mark xiii; Luke xxi.
[2] Matthew xxiv. 21, 29.
[3] Mark xiii. 19.
[4] Revelation vii. 14 literally.
[5] Leviticus xxvi. 14-39.

in the Plains of Moab,[1] and it runs through the song he left for their use.[2]

The experiences of the people of Israel in Egypt are found to be an illustration of the coming experience at the end, great persecution and suffering, then great deliverance through a visitation of judgment upon their persecutors, and great revelation of God's glory following. And the experience of the three young Hebrew exiles in Babylon comes to mind. They went through the fire, seven times heated, and they had a marvellous deliverance, and then high promotion.[3]

Certain Psalms shine with new light in the light of this terrible truth. Chief among these is the Ninety-first. Quite likely it grew up out of the experience of Israel at the last before leaving Egypt. It, of course, has its practical use in one's daily life. But the vividness and intensity of its meaning will probably never be realized as during the coming tribulation days. Nor will the exultant note running through the nine Psalms immediately following it be appreciated as by those experiencing deliverance when the tribulation is over. The Forty-sixth Psalm, and the Psalms of praise immediately following it, likewise seem to get new light.

It is quite probable that very much, all through this Book of Psalms, will be understood and appreciated fully only by the generation of God's people that go through the tribulation and know

[1] Deuteronomy xxviii. 15-68. [2] Deuteronomy xxxii.
[3] Daniel iii.

the deliverance following. Much of the old Book of God is quite meaningless to the Christian who has had no tribulation *experience*. That is, I mean who has never known opposition in his Christian faith, or who has slipped easily along when there is opposition.

The outstanding features in the Old Testament of this great experience are terrible persecution of the Jew, deliverance at the very worst pitch of extremity, by a visitation of judgment on their enemies, and by Jehovah coming in person for their deliverance; and then the great Kingdom following.

The outstanding features spoken of by our Lord Jesus in His Olivet talk agree with this, but go much more into detail, especially about the tribulation. The tribulation will be *preceded* by wars, rumors of wars, famines, earthquakes, and persecution. There will be many false religious teachers, many Christians untrue to their faith, and a great increase of wickedness. This is a sort of foreshadowing.

The tribulation itself will find all this enormously intensified. It will *begin* with some astonishing act of blasphemy in the temple in Jerusalem, run its terrible course, and close with a series of judgment-events, earthquake, heavens shaken, and great distress, ending in the visible appearance of the Lord Jesus Himself, out of heaven on the clouds. And this will be a signal for great penitential mourning among the people on the earth.

This, then, is the simple, broad outline with

which the thoughtful reader of God's Word would naturally be familiar as he turns to this prophetic book at the end to get our Lord's last message to His followers.

Getting a Broad, Clear Outlook.

As we turn now again to the book of Revelation it will help us to remember the general plan followed in its writing. It is like a series of dissolving views of the same scene, each of which lets us see the same thing from a different point of view.

This is a simple teaching rule for getting a clear grasp of what is being taught. We are familiar with it in the Bible. The story of creation is told in the first chapter of Genesis, and then told again in the second chapter with details not given in the first, the two together presenting the complete story. The historical books of Chronicles present one view of the kingdom of Israel, the official. The books of the Kings give another look at the same period; and the prophetic books a wholly different view as seen by these rarely spiritually minded men of God. Daniel is shown four visions of future events, all covering the same general stretch of events, but with a fuller description, here of one part and there of another. The four Gospels are a familiar illustration of the same principle in teaching and story-telling. This is the plan followed here.

I was impressed anew with the practical value

of this method one day in St. Petersburg. We had gone to look at the panorama of the siege of Sebastopol, then on exhibition in a huge, round building. It will be remembered that the British and French allied themselves with Turkey and Sardinia in an attempt to restrain the encroachments of Russia on Turkish territory. The famous charge of Balaklava, immortalized by Tennyson, is remembered as the most stirring event of that war. Its chief event was the siege of Sebastopol on the Crimea peninsula, in the Black Sea.

At the panorama we stood as though on a high central point in the city of Sebastopol, with the view spreading out in all directions. To the north lay the harbour with the Russian ships securely bottled in by the attacking fleets. To the west a body of French soldiers were retreating, hotly pursued by Russian troops, while in the distance British troops are hurrying to the relief of the French.

Then we looked east, where the fighting was going on at close range, the wounded being carried away and the reserves hastening up to take their places. And again we turned to the south, where the battle raged fiercest. The face of the commanding officer stood out so vividly. And we almost shrank from the fierceness of the fire. And the smell of powder almost seemed stifling.

And as I stood brooding afresh on the horrors of inhuman war, I was tremendously impressed that only by such successive views could I get such a grasp of that memorable siege. I had

a more intelligent and vivid understanding of it than ever before.

And so it is that we may get a simple, clear, and real grasp of the tremendous tribulation time that is coming, that it is presented to us in this fashion, first one distinct view, then another, and another, till some understanding of the whole begins to get hold of us.

We have seen the Lord Jesus, in the vision in chapters four and five, as He comes forward to take an advance step. We have seen the tremendous outburst of praise in heaven as He steps forward. This step and scene are in heaven. The earth is wholly unaware of it *at that moment.*

Now all that follows is connected directly with that advance step. This is the significant thing to get clearly fixed in mind. At the present time our Lord Jesus is still walking among the candlestick Churches watching and waiting. We are still in that waiting time. The Holy Spirit still dwells in the Church on earth.

At some time in the future, no one knows, nor can know, just when, the Lord Jesus will rise up in readiness for an advance move. He will withdraw the Holy Spirit from the Church up into His presence again "before the throne." *Then in connection with this advance step* there will occur on the earth the things spoken of in these pages following. This is the tremendous fact to keep clear, the immediate connection between these happenings on earth and His new move in heaven.

We come now to these happenings on earth. There are seven distinct views given here in this section, chapters six to the end of the book. There is a great detail in description which it would be both instructive and interesting to study out. But we want to get at the essential things. And so we will give our time and thought to these essentials.

Our Lord Jesus is represented as about to take possession of His realm. The first step is a dispossessing of the claimants in possession. This furnishes the key to what follows. The descriptions are of the process of cleaning out the evil forces. At the close of this we find Him taking possession (in chapter twenty) and reigning over the earth.

These descriptions make it clear at once that this is the tribulation so much spoken of in these preceding pages. What follows fits so into what has been spoken of that the identification seems complete. The thing our Lord Jesus is revealing here tallies with what He had told John before on Olivet.

There comes first a general description of the whole period (chapters vi.-vii.). Then follows a description of *how* these happenings will come. It will be through the withdrawal of restraint and so the loosening out of evil (chapters viii.-ix.). During this whole period there will be a special faithful witnessing on earth, in the midst of the riot of evil, to God and His truth (chapter xi.).

A detailed outline of the run of events fol-

lows, giving much additional information, picturing the rise and characteristics of the leader of the tribulation time, and the manner of its close (chapters xii.-xiv.). There follows this a description of the judgments and the supreme contest with which the period closes (chapters xv.-xvi.). There is a description of the organized system of evil, and then of the fall of the capital of the system (chapters xvii.-xviii.) And then follows the actual coming of our Lord Jesus, the setting up of the kingdom, and subsequent events (chapters xix.-xxii.).

A General Look at the Storm and Its Close.

We turn now to *the first* of these.[1] It begins with a crowned One seated on a white horse going forth conquering and to conquer. This description agrees with the much fuller description of the Lord Jesus near the end of the book, as he goes to the earth for the decisive close of the tribulation.[2]

This gives fresh emphasis to the fact that what follows is the direct result of His advance step. At once there follows on earth a time of war, famine, death, and of persecution to the death of God's people. There is no hint as to how long this goes on. It is brought to a close with an earthquake and an equally terrific disturbance of the heavens, the sun, moon, and stars, something unknown before.

The utmost consternation is created on earth.

[1] Chapters vi.-vii. [2] Chapter xix.

All conditions of men, crowned kings, merchant princes, men of autocratic power financially and politically and socially, join with the humblest in hiding themselves in the great holes made by the earthquake. They feel that the time of judgment has come, and they are not ready for it

The description of their terror tallies remarkably with the prophetic language used by Isaiah,[1] even as the whole description fits into our Lord's Olivet talk. This is seen to be a general, rapid vision of the whole tribulation period.

Then there follows what clearly seems to be a parenthesis fitting in just before the great earthquake. The earth and sea have been terribly torn up by the earthquake. This parenthesis begins with a command that the earth and sea be not hurt until certain things have taken place.

This fits the two events of the parenthesis in just before the ruinous earthquake takes place. The two events are of a radically different sort from what has just been told. They are thus put by themselves, and the run of evil and of judgment upon it, put by itself, so keeping these two quite clear, following the general plan of the book.

There are two events in this parenthesis. There is what is called the "sealing" of a certain number of the Hebrew tribes *on the earth*. Twelve thousand of each tribe are sealed, making a total of one hundred and forty-four thousand.

[1] Isaiah ii. 10-22.

The word "seal" is used in two senses in the Bible, as a means of fastening up a writing or roll, and, in the New Testament, commonly for the presence of the Holy Spirit in a human life.

The seal in this second sense was a mark of ownership. Paul tells us that we are *sealed* with the Holy Spirit,[1] so indicating that we belong to the Lord Jesus, who gives us this evidence of His ownership. If this simple, natural meaning be taken here, it would mean that at this time the Holy Spirit has been poured out upon the Jew. The spiritual regeneration spoken of so frequently in the prophetic pages takes place at this time.

The significance of the numbers should be noticed. Twelve is the number commonly used in the Bible for corporate completeness, to indicate that a group is complete. Twelve times twelve would simply represent a fully completed corporate number. That is to say, upon the entire body of Jews then living on the earth the Holy Spirit is poured out, thus marking them once again as God's peculiar people, restored fully to favour after the long national rejection.

The second event is of equally intense interest, indeed to us of non-Jewish birth it has yet greater interest. John is up in heaven. It is from that point of view that he sees. Now he is suddenly startled. All at once there appears before his eyes a group he had not seen before. He describes it as a great multitude, actually countless, out of all the peoples of the whole

[1] II Corinthians i. 22; Ephesians i. 13; iv. 30.

earth, a great polyglot polyracial world company.

They are clothed in white, holding the conqueror's palm in their hands, and singing, making wondrous music. John is getting another taste of the music of heaven. And their singing is a signal for a fresh outburst of praise by the angels, the elders, and the living creatures. All this seems to occur suddenly, this appearance of this new company before the throne.

John gazes spellbound, wondering who these are, and where they come from, and what this means. And he is told that these are they that come out of the tribulation, the great one, down on the earth. Then in a few exquisitely tender, heart-touching words their happiness is described.

These two events occur just before the terrible earthquake and the shake-up of the earth's heavenly bodies. Just before the judgment that closes the tribulation this double event takes place, the conversion of the Jews, and the catching away out of the tribulation distress on earth, up into the presence of the throne, of the followers of our Lord Jesus.

We remember that that great Jew, Paul, was converted by the appearance of Jesus in the heavens above him. We remember that in the Olivet talk Jesus says that His followers will so be gathered up to Himself at the time of His second coming. These two events, taking place here, tell us what has happened down on the earth. In his vision John, being in heaven, sees these things as they appear from above.

This is the first view of the tribulation. It begins with the moment when our Lord Jesus up in heaven begins action, describes the characteristics of the tribulation on earth, and closes with the national regeneration of Israel, and the catching up from earth of Christ's true followers.

Evil Let Loose.

The *second view* runs through chapters eight and nine. Chapters ten and eleven to the close of verse thirteen make a distinct parenthesis. And then this view is picked up again at eleven, fourteen, and runs to the close of that chapter. But this final bit in chapter eleven is merely a connecting link with what comes later. Practically the whole of this view is in chapters eight and nine.

It closes with an earthquake, so connecting it with the final event in the first view. It begins with a period of prolonged silence, which would seem to answer to the hush in the great volume of praise in the first view, when the Lamb takes the sealed roll. So it carries us back to the same starting-point as there.

There is first a striking scene before the throne, where John sees a golden altar. On this there is being offered incense, which is said to be added to the prayers of all the saints. Incense and prayers rise together before God. Then an angel pours some of the fire of this prayer-altar into the earth, and a storm follows.

So these two views, first and second, have another common starting-point, the beginning of a storm.

This is a very suggestive scene. The prayers of all the saints, both in earth and heaven, have a decided restraining influence over evil down on earth at the present time. At the close they will become a decisive influence in the cleaning-up process on earth, and the bringing in of the new order.

Then follows a fourfold description of distressing events on earth, which are caused by fiery influences coming out of the heavens. The language used seems to make clear that it is through a loosening out of the powers of evil that the tribulation comes.

In the picture language of the vision, "a great mountain burning with fire was cast into the sea," with injurious results to water, to life, and to shipping. A mountain is a common figure in the Bible for a great ruling power. So Israel is called by Isaiah.[1] The seventeenth chapter of Revelation speaks of seven kingdoms as seven mountains.[2] In Jeremiah, Babylon, which is spoken of repeatedly and typically as being the embodiment of evil and of opposition to God, is called: "O destroying mountain . . . which destroyest all the earth, (I) will make of thee a burnt mountain."[3] It speaks here also of "a great star,[4] burning as a torch," that fell

[1] Isaiah ii. 2.
[2] Revelation xvii. 9-10.
[3] Jeremiah li. 25.
[4] Revelation viii. 10, see also ix. 1; Isaiah xiv. 12-15.

upon the rivers and makes them bitter as wormwood. These two things seem to suggest clearly that the great hurt done to sea and vegetation, to all life, and through the obscuring of the heavenly lights, is a result directly of the powers of evil having been loosened out.

The long restraint upon evil through the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church is now withdrawn in the withdrawal of the Spirit. His withdrawal is practically an answer to the tacit prayer both of world and Church. That prayer is being answered. The "One" who restraineth has been withdrawn. This it is that makes the tribulation on its negative side. The awful character of the demons from the pit is so utterly beyond human experience up to that time that there seem no adequate words to describe them.

The Gospels are full of the awful activity of demons on earth in possessing men. In our own land there is not wanting plenty of evidence of men horribly possessed by demons. In the older countries of Europe this experience is much more marked. But it is in heathen lands that it is most marked, where even the very air seems charged with evil forces, as though these unseen demons swarmed about.

Yet all this sort of thing is now under restraint. What it will mean to have that restraint withdrawn, and the horrid hordes here described free to do as they will, no imagination can depict. This is well called the first *woe*, and an

awful woe it will be. Mercifully there is a time limit set on this demon activity.

Following this comes the loosing out of another horde of demons, as difficult of description, and yet more terrible. They seem countless, yet there is a limit to their numbers. The supreme Hand is never wholly withdrawn. These have power to kill as well as to torment. This is the second woe. It is most strikingly noticeable that neither of these things has influence to make men penitent.

The last item of this view is given in chapter xi. 14-19. The announcement is made that the sovereignty of the world is transferred to our Lord and His Christ. The temple of God is seen open, and some further action takes place, but the detail of it is reserved for another view. Such is the terrible sight in the second view of the tribulation time. Evil is loosened out, apparently unrestrained, and yet under restraint. This it is that makes the tribulation on its positive side.

The parenthesis in the description of this view has been spoken of. It runs through chapters ten and eleven to the close of verse thirteen, and contains two chief things. The first is a little group of three items. There is a fresh description of our Lord Jesus as He is seen standing with one foot on the sea and the other upon the earth, and holding a little open book. Then seven thunders roar out. John is about to write, but is told not to. That terrific storm coming is far greater than can be told. Then comes the

solemn declaration that there will be no further delay, but that at once shall be finished up this terrible time of judgment. Then follows a personal word to John. These three items make up chapter ten.

God's Faithful Witnesses.

Then comes the second thing, in chapter eleven on to verse thirteen, which proves to be *the third view* of the tribulation. It shows that during the whole of this tribulation time there will be a special faithful witness being borne to God and His truth. As the Holy Spirit is being withdrawn from the Church, these two men begin their special ministry of witnessing.

The place of that witness will be Jerusalem. But recent events will have brought a greatly diversified population to that city from all parts of the world. So that the witness becomes world-wide in its immediate reach, and probably in the reports of it that go out.

While there is good reason for thinking that these two witnesses may be Enoch and Elijah, the two men of Bible record, one before the Flood and one after, who were distinctively God's witnesses, and were taken away without death, yet it is best not to stop over a matter that has been and is apt to be a matter of mere idle speculative talk.[1] The thing worthy of note

[1] In regard to Elijah, see Malachi iv. 5-6. John the Baptist came in the spirit and power of Elijah, and of him our Lord said, "this is he who was to come."

is that as the Holy Spirit's distinctive witness is withdrawn there will be these two special witnesses sent to Jerusalem for a witness that will be world-wide in its extent and influence. Such is God's gracious patience and longsuffering.

These two men are clothed in mourning as a part of their witness. They have miraculous power in protecting themselves against attack, and in withholding rain, and sending plagues among the people, and in turning water into blood, to give force and effect to their testimony. Their witness continues through twelve hundred and sixty days.

John had already been told that Jerusalem would be trodden under foot by the nations for

Yet the events of judgment spoken of in Malachi did not take place when John the Baptist and Jesus came. The events spoken of prophetically in connection with His coming are divided into two groups, those of graciousness, finding fulfilment at the first coming, those of judgment followed by graciousness, at the second coming. So John the Baptist fulfils the Elijah part at the first of these two; in all probability Elijah himself at the second part, *i.e.*, "before the great and *terrible* day of Jehovah come."

In regard to Enoch, the passage in Jude, verse 14, is of significance. The language, "Enoch prophesied, . . . the Lord *came*, etc.," is probably spoken in the sense, familiar in the Bible, of a future action seen as already done. Here Enoch is spoken of as prophesying or preaching, *not* to the people before the Flood, but to a certain class of men belonging to Jude's generation, that is to the Church generation. The likeliest meaning of the words is that Enoch, the seventh and so on, *will* prophesy, saying, "behold the Lord *cometh*," and so on to close of verse 15.

forty-two months. We are apt to think that it has been trodden under foot or desecrated by the nations for an immensely longer period. But prophecy never gives any reckoning of time for Israel, except when Israel is an organized nation. It is concerned with telling Jewish *national* events.

At this time the Jews have their national organization again in Palestine. For forty-two months after the nation has been newly set up the city will be so trodden under the desecrating feet of the nations. This is the first hint of time we have had. The witnessing and the desecration of the holy city will continue side by side for three and a half years.

At the end of this period evil will be given full swing over these witnesses. They are killed and their bodies left lying in the streets, while the international crowds make merry because their tormentors, as these two are called, are gone. Then before the terror-stricken gaze of these crowds the two men come to life, and are caught up into the heavens. Is this the moment when all are caught up? Quite possibly. Then comes the terrible earthquake as at the end of the other two views.

The one distinctive thing told here is that during the tribulation, in the midst of all the blasphemous reign of unrestrained wickedness, there will be the unbroken, faithful witnessing. This seems to explain why the account comes as a parenthesis in the account of the awful riot of evil. During the worst of the evil there will

go on unbroken the faithful, gracious testimony of God's truth and love.

The Lawless Leader.

The fourth view takes the longest sweep of any, thus far, goes into much more detail, and gives much fresh information. It runs through chapters twelve to fourteen. In the intensely picturesque language of a woman arrayed in the most glorious splendour and dignity and power imaginable the nation of Israel is depicted.

This woman is with child. In more intensely dramatic language Satan is pictured as standing before the woman waiting to destroy her child as soon as born. The child is born, a man-child, who is to rule all the nations with autocratic sway. He is caught up to heaven, and his mother flees into the wilderness from the serpent. This is the opening action of this view.

The meaning lies open on the face. Israel gave birth to the man Jesus, who foiled all the attacks of Satan and ascended to heaven. The old prophetic characteristic of connecting events far apart without reference to intervening time is marked here. The long interval between the break-up of the Jew nation and its taking shape again as a nation, which has lasted nineteen hundred years roughly, comes between the last word of verse five and the first word of verse six.

The prophetic writing takes no reckoning of Israel, except as a nation. The woman fleeing

into the wilderness is Israel organized again as a nation suffering persecution. She is so persecuted for twelve hundred and sixty days, but divinely protected and preserved. Such is the first act of the drama pictured here.[1]

Then we are told *why* the woman flees, that is, the explanation of this special persecution of the Jew this time.[2] Satan has had his headquarters somewhere in the heavens, below God's throne, but above the earth. Now, after a conflict, he is cast out of heaven, down to the earth. Here is a third event that comes approximately at the beginning of the tribulation time, Satan is cast down to the earth.

The Holy Spirit is withdrawn from the Church up to heaven, so removing the restraint upon evil. Satan is cast out of heaven and comes down to earth. Thus there is a double intensifying of evil on the earth, the withdrawal of restraint, and the presence of the evil one himself. And as the witness of the Holy Spirit is withdrawn the special witness of the two men in Jerusalem begins.

The defeat of Satan in this heavenly conflict draws out a burst of praise from the upper hosts. It is because of the great victory of our Lord Jesus in His death that this victory is gotten. They overcome because of the blood of the Lamb, *and* the word of their testimony, *and* they loved not their lives unto death,—a threefold cord that could never, and can never, be broken or successfully resisted.

[1] Revelation xii. 1-6. [2] Revelation xii. 7-17.

This explains the special persecution at this time of the reshaped Jewish nation. It is the outburst of the rage of the freshly defeated Satan. But the Jew is protected. The armies that would swallow the Jew up are swallowed up by the great earthquake that closes the tribulation time.

The length of this persecution is put in two different ways, twelve hundred and sixty days, and "time, times, and half a time." This latter phrase seems to be an old Oriental or Hebrew way of saying a year, two years, and half a year. The same length of time is expressed in yet another way in the eleventh chapter, forty and two months. The time is thus put in three different ways, that we may know surely that it means just plain three and a half years of our common time. It is significant that the dragon makes war with "the rest" of the woman's seed. This can only mean the Church, which of course was born in the Jewish nation. This is the first run of events in this view.[1]

Then follows a description of the awful leader of evil during the tribulation time.[2] It is significant that, as Satan is cast out of heaven down to the earth, this leader appears among men. He has great intelligence and power and is the very embodiment of blasphemy. He is described as a strange mixture of wild beasts, having the chief characteristic strength of each, the cunning of the leopard, the feet of the bear, and the mouth of the lion.

[1] Revelation xii. [2] Revelation xiii.

He is the personal representative on earth among men of Satan. There is something strangely uncanny in the suggestion that he is some former leader, who died, and is now raised from the dead. There seems to be nothing too daring for Satan to attempt in his impious opposition to God. This leader comes into great prominence and power. All the world wonders after him. And they worship Satan, who is recognized as giving his power to this notorious leader.

He comes to be accepted as the world ruler, and is commonly worshipped by the people. And he not only persecutes God's people, but overcomes them. A limit of time is set to his sway. It is the same as already noted for Jerusalem being desecrated, for God's two witnesses, and for the persecution of the Jew, *i.e.*, forty and two months, three and a half years.

It is striking that in the midst of the description of his terrible reign there comes a word that sounds like an echo from those messages to the Churches. "If any man hath an ear, let him hear." [1] Then the word goes on warning, pleading, and encouraging. In the midst of these blasphemous conditions every man must do as he personally decides. He may yield to this evil and become a captive of evil, bound hand and foot. He may try to use the world's weapons in fighting God's battle, but will find himself outmatched in their use. He may rise to the true level, and steadfastly cling to his faith,

[1] Chapter xiii. 9-10.

and endure, and by faith be victorious in the end.

The description goes on to tell of the blasphemous worship demanded of all. This leader has an assistant or lieutenant to whom he deputizes great power. He makes an image to his chief, and demands all to worship at this shrine. He has supernatural power, that is, devilishly supernatural. He performs great miracles, even calling down fire from heaven. He gives breath to the image and makes it speak. And he punishes with death any one who refuses this blasphemous worship to the leader and his image. And every one is required to have a mark on his hand or his forehead as indicating his loyalty to the leader. Whoever refuses is unable to buy or sell. It is the boycott principle carried to the last extreme.

While God's two witnesses are doing miracles by divine power this lieutenant is doing them by devilish power. So the fearful account goes on. One can easily imagine the vast crowds swayed by the idolatrous worship, and the intense suffering and distress among those who insist on being steadfast and true in their faith.

Now in the midst of all this terrible scene John is suddenly and tremendously startled by something else.[1]

In the vision John is in heaven looking down on these scenes on the earth. Now his attention is attracted by a scene that suddenly takes place before his eyes in heaven. It is a scene

[1] Revelation xiv. 1-5.

of wondrous winsomeness and beauty. It stands out in sharpest contrast with what is going on on the earth.

There's a great company standing around the Lord Jesus, before the throne. They are singing a wonderful song to the accompaniment of harps, which they have. The volume of music is like the voice of many waters, or like great thunder. There is a simple, fine description of the character of these singers. They are *pure,* and they are *obedient.* In their purity they are as undefiled virgins, the highest possible statement of purity. And they follow the Lamb unquestioningly whithersoever He goeth with fullest obedience.

Who are these, and where have they come from so suddenly, at this moment, into the presence of the One on the throne? The description tells just what has happened. When things are at their devilish worst down on the earth the Lord Jesus has caught up His own from the earth. And they have become like Him in character, for now they see Him face to face as He is.

This recalls the scene, essentially the same, back in the first view, in chapter seven, where the great multitudes are suddenly seen before the throne with palm branches, songs, and white garments. It is the same company as there. But there is a difference in telling the numbers. *There* they are too many to be counted. *Here* they are said to be a hundred and forty-four thousand. It is symbolical, a picture number,

the number of full corporate completeness as with the Spirit-baptized Jews in chapter seven.

The believers caught up out of the great tribulation have been joined by the trusting hearts of all time who have been waiting in the Father's presence for this glad day. The number is now complete of all from creation's earliest dawn, who by grace have followed fully, regardless of hindrance or opposition. This great climax is thus seen by John in sudden and sharp contrast with the climax of hellish evil on the earth.

Then John is shown the steps by which this climax is reached.[1] Verses six to the close of this chapter seem clearly to be a detail of what has gone before, describing the steps by which this climax is reached, and then reaching further to the judgment upon the evil. During the iniquitous scenes being enacted on earth an angel is seen flying in mid-heavens calling to the people on earth, in warning, to give their worship and reverence to God only. The gracious wooing of God never ceases.

Another angel follows, calling out that the great system of iniquity, in which they are enmeshed, is doomed. A third gives solemn warning that those who yield to the terrible pressure, and engage in the blasphemous worship, will be surely and terribly punished. Again there comes another echo of the strain of pleading in the Church messages. In the midst of just such conditions as prevail then, the saints can be

[1] Revelation xiv. 6-20.

steady in keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

And down into the awful persecution being waged comes an encouraging voice from heaven. There is special blessing from God on all those who remain true, even unto death. There will be sweetest rest for them, and their faithful witnessing and suffering shall be all noted and acknowledged and rewarded as they come up into the Father's presence.

And then follows the blessed harvest of the righteous whose wonderful arrival in heaven has already been told in the opening scene of this chapter. And then follows the awful harvest of evil down on the earth, the visitation of judgments coming at the very end of the persecution.

So closes this long remarkable view of the tribulation. It connects back with the nation of Israel. Its beginning is connected practically with the casting of Satan down to earth. It gives a description of the leader and the nature of the persecution, and a brief statement of the steps with which it ends. And it states in three different ways that the length of time involved is three and a half years.

A Bitter Cup to Its Dregs.

The fifth view[1] is, not of the whole tribulation time as with these others, but of only a part, the closing part. It speaks of the visitation of judgments, the great climactic battle,

[1] Revelation xv.-xvi.

and the earthquake, with which the period is brought to its end.

It connects at the point in the fourth view[1] where those who have been suffering in the tribulation are seen standing before the throne singing with harps. It is said that they are singing the song of Moses, who had the experience of tribulation and deliverance in Egypt, and the song of the Lamb, who went through the worst tribulation experience in His contest with Satan and sin on our behalf.

It connects also with the close of the second view,[2] where the temple is seen opened and the ark of the covenant is seen. That covenant is now to receive further fulfilment. God never forgets His promises and agreements. Seven angels have seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God. In this way is told the visitation of judgments now described as taking place at this time.

In the first view the picture is of *seals* being broken or opened, which indicates the execution of a document. The *trumpets* of the next view indicate a commanding call to action; the seven *thunders,* not written, a great storm. These *bowls* or vials indicate the administration of a dose of bitter-tasting medicine. The visitation of judgments by God is commonly spoken of in Scripture in this language.[3]

[1] Revelation xiv. 1-5. [2] Revelation xi. 19.

[3] Psalm xi. 6; lx. 3; lxxv. 8; Job xxi. 20; Isaiah li. 17, 22, 23; Jeremiah xxv. 15-17; Ezekiel xxiii. 31-33; Habakkuk ii. 16; Zechariah xii. 2.

Then follows the description of the judgments upon men's persons, and everything concerning their life. Men's bodies are diseased, the water is unfit to drink, the food supply cut short; they suffer with terrible heat, and then darkness. But there is no penitence. The Euphrates is said to be dried up, suggesting that it is the great river at or near the world's centre of action. So, it is said, the way is prepared for the kings that come from the east.

And the prophetic bit in Isaiah comes to mind about men passing over the Euphrates at the time of the great gathering of the Jews.[1] As though aroused by all this to bitterest opposition there is increased demon activity, and through it a great gathering of all nations, at a place named in Palestine, for a great battle.

Then a terrible climax comes in the earthquake, with which the first, second, and third views closed. It is the worst earthquake ever experienced. It centres in "*the* great city," Babylon, the capital of the whole system of wickedness. With the storm is a terrible hail. The description tallies with that in the close of the first view,[2] and with the vivid prophetic bit in Isaiah ii. 10-22.

There's no suggestion of how much time all this takes. The judgments visited on Egypt at the deliverance of Israel are described at much greater length, running into ten items. Yet all could have occurred within five weeks, allowing for brief intervals. Whether these judgments

[1] Isaiah xi. 15-16. [2] Revelation vi. 15-17.

occur in succession, or all at once, or partly in both ways, they could all come within a very short time. This fifth view depicts the final scene. It gives the visitation of judgments ending the tribulation period, describes a great pitched battle, in which all nations are involved, and ends with the earthquake. This is the third of the three great woes.[1]

The sixth view is of the great system of wickedness in the world, through which the tribulation comes, and which is judged at its close.[2] The description is full of details of great interest and instructiveness, but we can only have time at present for the essential thing being taught. The Spirit takes John into a wilderness. To the Spirit's eye wherever wickedness has sway, whether vulgar or polished, political or commercial, cunning or brazen, it is a wilderness.

Here is shown a woman gorgeously clothed, prodigally bedecked with jewels, and having a cup in her hand, made of gold, but full of vile filth. Upon her forehead appears a description: "Mystery [or explanation of mystery], Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth." This woman is riding upon a strange beast; it is scarlet-colored, with seven heads and ten horns, and full of blasphemous names. This is the startlingly suggestive picture.

Who is this woman? And what is this beast upon which she is seated? The whole description taken together suggests that she is meant

[1] Revelation xi. 14. [2] Chapters xvii. and xviii.

to stand for the whole system of wickedness which has had such sway in the world from earliest time until the end. And the beast represents typically the dominant governmental powers. The two have always worked together. There has been a consistent unity of spirit and of characteristic, and a persistent devilishness marking the wickedness in the world throughout the ages.

It has been as though there were an unseen spirit power tirelessly at work *behind* all the varied manifestations of evil. The dominant characteristic always has been blasphemy of God. It has controlled thrones and royal power, and has had unlimited gold at its command. And it has always been an enemy, subtle or open, cunning or violent, of God and His people.

That system or genius of evil is represented in the Old Testament as finding expression in one great political power after another, but chiefly in the power of Babylon. Babylon stands typically in these older pages, not merely for the great empire of the Euphrates, but for the unseen spirit of evil lying behind that power, and making use of it to carry through its own foul purposes.

But that unseen evil spirit power has found more than one agency to dominate and use. Babylon long since passed off the stage as a political factor. But the power of evil has not ceased. It is distressing to note another great organization behind and through which the power of evil has worked. What is the system that

has, for the past sixteen centuries, been supported by the various great civil governments?

There is only one answer. It is the organization known as "the Christian Church." And the term Church must be taken here in its fullest, broadest meaning. Its great main stem historically is the Roman Catholic Church. The first great split-off was the Greek Orthodox Church. The Church of England was a later break-off. These, with the various governmentally supported Churches, and those free of such support, and various ancient primitive bodies,—these all together make up the organization known as "the Church."

The two symbolical characteristics of this woman and the two dominant characteristics of this historical Church are the same. The Church has been and is supported almost wholly by the civil governments, and used by them in furthering their policies. And it has been active in persecuting to death the people of God who would not yield to its domination. It has been marked by intolerance of all not yielding to its wishes, and especially of the Jew. That intolerance has been carried not only to the extreme of blood, but a riot of bloodshed. This is utterly heart-breaking to realize and to repeat.

The woman is said to be "drunken (1) with the blood of the saints, and (2) with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus." The twofold statement is seen to cover the two great periods, before Christ and since. And it covers also the two great powers through which the spirit of

evil has chiefly worked in those two periods. But the name given first in the plains of Shinar, and used characteristically of the God-defying power of evil, is given here, Babylon. It will be Babylon again at the very end after the Church system is overthrown.

It is plainly said that the beast represents the great civil or governmental power in its final stage, the shape it will be in at the end when these events occur.[1] The chief dominating political power of the world will have passed through a succession of changes, seven kingdoms successively following each other. At the end there will be a combination of some sort, with ten great subdivisions, and one great head over all.

But at the last, the civil power will discard the Church, and persecute it. The spirit of evil thus gets embodiment typically in the great Babylon power, then in the Church, and at the very last, in a coalition of civil powers heading up in a new Babylon.

Then follows announcement of the fall of Babylon. The city is regarded here as the earthly capital of the organized system of unseen evil spirit power at work in the world. The city and the system are inseparably allied. The name Babylon is used in the Bible for both system and city.

If the question be asked what city is meant here, there can be but one answer. From the twelfth of Genesis on the Bible never touches

[1] Revelation xvii. 8-12.

history, except as history touches Israel as a nation. A thoughtful review of the book makes this clear. And this book of Revelation is a gathering-up of Bible threads, and only these. There is only one city in the Bible record that answers to the description here, "the great city which reigneth over the kings of the earth." "Babylon *the* great."

But the old Babylon lies in ruins. And its ruined condition has been quoted as the fulfilment of the famous passage in Isaiah xiii. 19-22. It should be carefully noted that the present conditions at the site of old Babylon do not seem to satisfy fully the language of that passage. It would seem to be another illustration of the rare use of language in the Bible, which adapts a passage accurately to one event, and then to a second event, a long time afterward.

This would, of course, involve the rebuilding of the old capital of the Euphrates. The reverent student quietly notes the movements taking place in that part of the world, but restrains mere curious speculation, as he continues fervently to pray, "Thy kingdom come."

This eighteenth chapter of Revelation seems like an echo of that intense twenty-first of Isaiah, and indeed of a strain sounding all through the prophetic books. One familiar with the old writings is not surprised to find this echo; he expects it. No echo of God's voice or purpose is ever lost. God never loses any of the threads out of His hand.

Hallelujah! He Comes.

The seventh view presents the climax. It includes from chapter nineteen to chapter twenty-two, verse five. It presents in full the great scene that closes this tribulation period; touches the kingdom in a bare word so as to fit it into its place in the scheme of events being outlined; and then gives the final wind-up after the Kingdom time is over. We want to look now at the portion connected immediately with what has just gone before, the description of the wondrous close of the tribulation, in chapters nineteen, verse one, to twenty, verse three.

John hears a great outburst of worship and praise in heaven. It resembles the outburst back in chapter five, when the Lamb took the book. But it is seen to be yet greater than that. Its joy and delight seem wholly unbounded. Again the living creatures and the four and twenty elders lead the song that bursts out.

John tries to tell how great was the volume of adoring song that fills all heaven. It is like the voice of a great multitude, like the waters that he had heard many a time breaking in deafening roar on the rocky coast of Patmos, like the mighty thunders which he had heard so much in these visions.

And the song they sang explains the exuberance of their singing, "Hallelujah: for the Lord our God, the Almighty *reigneth.*" At last He *reigneth.* In the earlier parts of the book God

is spoken of as "He who is and who was, and *who cometh.*"[1] As later events are described that last part "who cometh" is significantly dropped.[2] Clearly at these points being described He has come. Now the great realization bursts out from countless voices, the Lord, our God, the Almighty *reigneth!*

And John is bidden to write the words whose refrain has filled such a place in hymns and devout speech, "Blessed are they that are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And the one who seems to be serving as John's guide puts peculiar emphasis on all that is being revealed by saying, "these are true words of God."

John is so overwhelmed that he falls down to worship this one. And then he finds that this is one of his own redeemed brothers of the earth. And as He quietly bids John give his worship to One only, He adds very significant words: "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The whole genius and soul of all this wealth of prophecy is to point men to our Lord Jesus Christ, God to us.

And now comes the event toward which the ages have looked. *The heavens open.* And *our Lord Jesus appears* coming in glory to earth. At last He comes. There's a wonderful description. He comes as a conqueror, riding forth to judge the earth righteously, and to make war on evil. His eyes are as a flame of fire, and upon His

[1] Revelation i. 4, 8; iv. 8.
[2] Revelation xi. 17; xvi. 5.

head many diadems. He has a name indicating that He is all alone in the experiences He has been through, and in His character. He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords, to rule all the earth with a new absolutism, to right all wrongs, and visit the indignant wrath of God upon all sin.

As He appears an angel gives warning of what is coming. In words that are an echo of Ezekiel's, long centuries before, he calls to all the scavenger birds of the earth that haunt battlefields to come to a great feasting time.[1] And John sees the vast armies of the nations of the earth all gathered together for a last mighty battle, under the leadership of the great leader of lawlessness and his lieutenant.

And the utter impotence of their struggle against God is revealed in the quietness and brevity with which their defeat and capture are told. Satan's great earth leader and his chief who deceived the people with his miraculous power, both are taken and forever put away. And then Satan himself is chained and fastened securely in the abyss. Such is the tremendous consummation quietly told in a few lines. And then follows the setting up of the glorious kingdom on earth.

Whatever the immediate circumstances under which the Second Psalm was penned, it will be readily seen how it fits into this situation at the end.

[1] Ezekiel xxxix. 17-20.

"Why do the nations tumultuously assemble,
And the peoples meditate a vain thing?
The kings of the earth set themselves,
And the rulers take counsel together,
Against Jehovah and against His Anointed, saying,
'Let us break their bonds asunder,
And cast away their cords from us.'"

But their efforts seem so puny, and the result so one-sided, that

"He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh:
The Lord will have them in derision."

And we remember that, in these Revelation pages, it is always with the sword of His mouth that the Lord Jesus is said to fight, as we read on:

"Then will He *speak* unto them in His wrath,
And vex [or trouble] them in His sore displeasure;
[saying]
'Yet *I* have set *my* King
Upon my holy hill of Zion.'"

Then the Son speaks:

"I will tell of the decree:
Jehovah said unto me, 'thou art my Son;
This day have I begotten thee.
Ask of me and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance,
And the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.
Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron;
Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.'"

And the writer of the Psalms closed with a

word of earnest counsel to the kings of earth:

"Now therefore be wise, O ye kings:
Be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
Serve Jehovah with fear,
And rejoice with trembling [awe],
Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and ye perish in the way,
For His wrath will soon be kindled.
Blessed are all they that take refuge in Him."

Thus it is seen that these seven views describe (1) the general characteristics of the tribulation time; (2) the way in which it comes, that is, by the withdrawal of restraint and so the loosing of evil; (3) the faithful witness being borne throughout the period; (4) the great evil leader and the character of the persecution he wages; (5) the visitation of judgments upon earth with the great gathering of nations to battle against God; (6) the world system of evil; and (7) the coming of our Lord Jesus to judge evil and set up the kingdom.

Still He Waits.

It will at once be noted that these things group up, naturally and easily, under *three headings.* First, there is a terrible *persecution* of God's people. This will end in a *visitation* of *judgments,* including great plagues. There will be a gathering of the armies of all nations, and a great battle. It will end in a decisive defeat for them by the personal coming of the Lord Jesus, and will be accompanied by a terrific earthquake

and an equally terrific shake-up of the heavenly bodies connected with the earth, sun, moon, and stars. Then comes the establishment of the *Kingdom of God* upon earth. These three things stand dominantly out.

It comes as a surprise to one who has not been thinking especially about it, to find how these three things are the same three that stood out so prominently at the close of the study of future items in the old prophetic books. It is natural that it should be so, of course, since the Book of God is one in its essential unity.

But there is a great fascination in finding the parts to come together so simply and naturally. As we gather up the Old Testament pages these three things sift out and group together as distinctly not yet fulfilled, and so future. As we listen to our Lord Jesus talking, again these same three items are emphasized by Him. And now the same three are found here.

Dr. A. F. Schauffler tells of a striking experience he had in connection with his mission work in New York City. A letter came to him from a stranger in Germany. It said: "I know you are a city missionary. I am sending a trunk in your care. Inclosed in this letter you will find a piece of paper cut. A man will come and present to you a piece of paper matching this piece. Please give him the trunk." And enclosed in the letter was a piece of paper cut in zigzags.

Letter and paper were laid away to await developments. Some weeks later a stranger came

in and presented a queerly cut piece of paper, saying: "I think you have a piece that matches this." Dr. Schauffler got out his piece of paper, laid the two side by side, found that they matched, and said to his visitor: "There's your trunk."

Even so these prophetic pages of the New Testament are found to fit exactly the pages of the Old, written centuries before. It is not surprising, however. One hand cut the paper into two pieces in Germany, and naturally they fitted when put together in New York. One Hand has guided the men writing in both Old and New.

When Jeremiah was first called to his work as God's messenger he was shown in vision the branch of an almond tree. The almond tree is the earliest of all trees to wake from its winter's sleep at the first hint of spring warmth coming. And so it was called the "watching" or "watcher" tree. Then God said to Jeremiah: "Even so, I eagerly watch over my word to bring it to life and fruitage at the very earliest opportunity."[1] And so the word of this watching God and its fulfilment match, regardless of the thing we call time, even running into centuries.

And it is very helpful for those of us who have had a sort of dread of prophecy as of a vague something that we can't understand, to find after all how simple it is. Just three great items stand out of these prophetic pages that are waiting fulfilment.

[1] Jeremiah i. 11-12.

Such is the seven-fold view, which is taken up almost wholly with the clearing-up storm in the King's realm. But all this is still future. We are still in that waiting time. Our Lord Jesus still stands among the candlesticks. Still He is waiting for His Church to be faithful. He still waits for each of us who is a bit of His Church. He is depending on us to be faithful, by His grace, day by day, during this waiting time. And while He waits *all His limitless power is at our disposal,* as we follow His leading. We may take as much as we need. But the taking must be with the life.

A dear missionary friend told of a simple experience that meant much to him. We were walking together in the town in Korea where his mission work is. His school was the centre of the recent troublous times in Korea, and the storm seemed to rage about his own person at its outburst. As we talked all his native teachers and several of his older students were in prison. The experience he told me was of earlier days in this country, but had come back to his memory as a great refreshment during the troublous times.

He was a professor in a small college in our Middle West. Special funds were being raised for extension. He was to ask a certain man of wealth for a large donation. He planned and prayed much, and at last went to see the man in another city by appointment. He had a keen sense of the responsibility of his task.

As he entered the building where the man's office was he was greeted cordially by a young man whom he remembered as a former student, to whom he had been friendly in some time of minor need. But he had not connected him in his mind with this wealthy man, whose son he was. Now as the former student learned of his professor friend's errand, he said with all the confidence of a son on good terms with his father:

"Come right in; father's here."

As they stepped into the man's office the son said, simply:

"Father, this is an old friend of mine. He's all right. Give him whatever he wants."

And the father, busy at his desk, with barely a look at the appointed visitor, reached one hand over for his checkbook, and simply said:

"How much do you want?"

My friend, taken completely by surprise at the unexpected turn of events, managed to name the large sum he had been thinking and praying over so much. And before he could quite recover from his surprise, he found himself outside walking up the street with the coveted check in his pocket, praising God for such an answer to his prayers. It had been years before, but as we walked and talked it all came back with a fresh flush of feeling.

The present is a waiting time. It may seem to some as though they are in the wilderness. Clear and distinct comes a quiet voice:

"What'll you have? Whatever you choose to ask, for My Son's sake."

May we reach out to take as much as He is reaching down to give. But the taking must be with the life.

VII.—THE CROWNED CHRIST REIGNING

"On this side of the river and on that was the tree of life, bearing twelve fruits."

"A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot!
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot—
The veriest school
Of peace; and yet the fool
Contends that God is not—
Not God! in gardens! when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign;
'Tis very sure God walks in mine."

THE CROWNED CHRIST REIGNING

(Revelation, Chapters xx:4-xxii.)

Day Is Coming.

It's a long lane that has no turning. Every valley leads up a hillside to a hilltop. Every storm ends in sunshine at the last. Every night runs out; the dawn *will* break; the new day comes; the shadows flee before the new shining. The battle for right will end in victory, and in a decisive victory. There'll be no draw here. Faith wins at last. It's been a long night of fighting. Sometimes it seems endless.

The man in the thick of the fight, with moist brow, and clenched hand, and quick breath and throbbing heart, sometimes sobs out the prayer, "O Lord, how long before the night is over, and the dawn breaks?" And quietly through the smoke and din of the conflict a still, small voice says, "Steady, my child, steady; the day is surely coming, and with day victory; steady, steady a bit longer."

Now here in vision the fight is over, the victory won. And God's visions always become realities. The vision is yet for the appointed time, and it panteth breathlessly toward the real-

ization, and will not fail nor delay. Though it tarry, wait for it; it will certainly come on time; it will not be late.[1]

In the seventh view the kingdom follows immediately that decisive conflict and the putting of Satan out of the way for the time being. The redeemed ones at once begin their blessed service of fellowship with the King in reigning over the kingdom. Emphasis is placed on the fact that at this time there has been a resurrection of believers. And these resurrected ones join with those caught up without death in administering the kingdom. This kingdom is said to last for a thousand years, that length of time being named only here, and here six times.

There is much talk in our day about the kingdom. All Christendom has been repeating for nineteen centuries the petition, "Thy kingdom come." It will be of intense and practical interest to see just what the kingdom is, as pictured in the Bible. It is barely mentioned in this place in Revelation, to fit it into its place in the scheme of future events being outlined.

But it is the chief theme in these old prophetic pages, around which all others group. Immediate historical events furnish the setting, but there is a continual swinging to the coming future greatness. The yellow glory-light of the coming kingdom is never out of the prophetic sky. Jeremiah is the one most absorbed in the boiling of the political pot of his own strenuous time, but even he, at times, lifts his head and

[1] Habakkuk ii. 3.

gets such a glimpse of the coming kingdom as causes him to mix some rose tincture with the jet black ink he habitually uses.

The Kingdom Picture.

Let us look briefly at the kingdom picture of these older pages. Its capital is Jerusalem, which becomes the world capital. It will be the joy of the whole earth. Israel will be the first nation of the earth, to which all others will be tributary. But it will be not the Israel of these old pages, nor the Jew as he is known characteristically throughout history. Israel will be a new nation, made new in character by the power of the Holy Spirit. The winsome picture of the baptized crowds at Pentecost gives an inkling of the spirit that will sway the new nation.[1] They will be a nation of radiant faces and thrilled hearts.

The effect of this upon all other nations is marked. Through Israel's regeneration and new leadership, every other nation is to know a new spirit life. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon Israel is to be followed by an outpouring upon *all* flesh. Pentecost is merely a beginning of what is to be universal. There will be a widespread voluntary coming to Israel for religious instruction. She becomes the world's teacher until the knowledge of God covers the whole earth as the waters cover the sea. But all this will be purely a voluntary movement

[1] Acts ii. 44-47; iv. 32-34.

among the nations. There will be war no longer, but universal peace.

There's one part of the picture specially comforting. That vast majority, *the poor,* will be specially guarded and cared for. There will be no hungry people, nor cold, nor poorly clad; no unemployed begging for a chance to earn a dry crust, and no workers fighting for a fair share of the fruit of their toil. But there are yet tenderer touches on the canvas. Broken hearts will be healed, prison doors unhung, broken family circles complete again.

A recent issue of The Sunday School Times tells a simple, touching incident of a mission hall in Korea. A Korean woman living in the country heard of the wonderful things happening there, and came to town to find out for herself, and get some help. But she didn't know where the hall was, nor what name it was called. So she inquired on the streets for the place where they *cured the broken heart.* And at once she was directed to the mission hall. That sort of thing will become a blessed commonplace in the beginning of the kingdom time.

Then there are certain radical changes in *nature.* Splendid rivers of waters are to flow through or by Jerusalem, suggesting radical changes in the formation of the land there. That fortress city, on the hilltop, Jerusalem, becomes as the world's metropolis, a mighty city, with rivers floating a world's commerce. The light of sun and moon will be greatly intensified, so influencing the fertility of the earth. Before

their healing light and heat, in the newly tempered atmosphere, all poisonous growths, the blight of drought, and suffering of untempered heat, will disappear.

And with this goes a change in the *animal* creation. Hate will be gone. And so beasts that are dreaded because of their ferocity and treachery and poisonous power will be wholly changed. There will be mutual cessation of cruelty to animals by man, and of danger to man by animals, for all hate and violence will be gone.

And some one raises his eyebrows sceptically and says, ironically, "What fairy tale, what skipper's yarn, is this?" Well, I frankly confess that I don't know anything about this matter, except what I find in this old Book of God. But I confess, too, that I try studiously to get a common-sense, poised, Spirit-enlightened understanding of what this Book does tell. And then I accept it, and go by it, regardless of probabilities or improbabilities. It may seem like a fairy tale, yet it is only the picture of the coming kingdom soberly set forth in these old pages.

As we turn to the Gospel pages we find the kingdom to be the chief thing Jesus is talking about. The Gospel days are sample days of the kingdom in the personal blessings bestowed. Read through these accounts of blind eyes opened, the lame walking, the maimed made whole, the dumb singing, the distressed in whatever way relieved, the ignorant instructed, the

sinful wooed, and the bad of heart and life being blessedly changed.

All this is a taste of the kingdom. Jesus was wooing men to accept King and kingdom. To-day, as in all Church time, bodily healing is a privilege for those who can take it, and a gift for the rare few who can be entrusted with it. In these Gospel pages it was freely bestowed on multitudes, and the gift exercised with power by many. Even so it will be in the kingdom time.

Most of the parables are found to be connected in their first meaning with explaining about the kingdom. The kingdom will follow the law of growth that is common in nature, sowing, waiting, cultivating, and reaping.[1] Its influence will spread gradually until all feel its presence and power.[2] It must meet and deal with the obstacles presented by different men's temperaments and dispositions and temptations.[3] There will be opposition, gradually overcome, but never fully.[4] Many will be carried along by the current of the day. It will be a good current, for righteousness will be the common thing then. But in their hearts many will long for something else, something different.[5]

But to many, the new blessed kingdom message will come as a treasure accidentally stumbled upon, not being looked for, but now valued as very precious.[6] To others it will come

[1] Mark iv. 26-29. Matthew xiii. 31-32.
[2] Matthew xiii. 33. [3] Matthew xiii. 3-9. 18-23.
[4] Matthew xiii. 24-30. [5] Matthew xiii. 47-50.
[6] Matthew xiii. 44.

as *the* thing they have been eagerly seeking for, and which satisfies the deepest yearnings.[1] One who has had any touch with the pathetic yearning of years found in non-Christian lands can better appreciate the results of this kind in these glad coming days.

The *characteristic spirit* of the kingdom stands sharply out in contrast with the dominant spirit of our own time. The kingdom is said to belong peculiarly to those who are "poor in spirit," in whom self-assertion and pride have quite gone out, leaving them humble and lowly in heart. The meek will inherit the earth, and will take down all the walls and fences, for all conditions of life are radically changed. The penitent man or woman will be freely received regardless of their past, while the proud will find the doorway too low for their unbending heads.[2]

Rewards in the kingdom will not be given as a matter of merit, as in our present endless cutting and rivalry, but will be thought of wholly as evidence of the graciousness of the King.[3] And yet more striking, the rewards given will be the privilege of serving, some more, some less, according as they have become skilled in serving.[4] He who serves most truly will be given preferment.[5] The thing prized above all else will be glad obedience to the King.

It will be seen that the kingdom is to be

[1] Matthew xiii. 45-46.
[2] Matthew xxi. 31.
[3] Matthew xx. 1-16.
[4] Luke xix. 11-27.
[5] Matthew xx. 25-28.

a time of world-wide evangelization. Indeed this is *the purpose* of the kingdom. There are two periods of world-wide evangelization in our Lord's planning. The present is the Church time of such evangelizing. This is, of course, the true main objective of the Church. This is the reason for the Church's existence, to take the message of a crucified risen Christ to all men, that so the way may be prepared for His return, and through that for the next period of evangelizing.

The kingdom period of world-wide evangelization is under radically different conditions. Then the evil one will be removed from the scene of action, the Holy Spirit will have been poured out upon all flesh, and so the moral veil now upon men's eyes will be removed. The Jews, with all their characteristic aggressiveness and perseverance, now intensified by the Holy Spirit's presence, will be a nation of missionaries to all the earth. The redeemed ones in their resurrection bodies will have the blessed privilege of helping. And over all will be the presence and supervision of the King, our Lord Jesus Himself. That will be world-wide evangelization in earnest.

Such is a faint glimpse given in both Old and New Testaments of the kingdom spoken of in these Revelation pages in such few words. Almost the whole Bible lies back of those few words. What a time it will be for this old earth! With renewed fervour our hearts repeat, "Thy kingdom come."

The Final Crisis of Choice.

But it is made clear at once to John that the kingdom is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end, a wonderful means to a blessed end. It is startling to find that after that long blessed reign the evil one is to be loosed out of his prison-abyss. This seems at first flush too startling to be credible. But on reflection the reason becomes plain, and reveals the strength as well as the tenderness of God's love.

All through the kingdom time there are those who are in heart opposed to this new order of things. They long for the leeks and onions and garlic of the old eating. There will be some yielding only a feigned allegiance to the King.[1] That dragnet of the parable has gathered some fish that didn't want to be caught, and want a chance to get away to their own native waters again.[2] The tares of another parable are left in with the wheat until the end reveals which is real wheat and which really tares.[3]

The one thing God longs for is love. And that only is love which is the free outpouring of the heart. He longs for love as our free choice. This is the image of God in which we have all been made. We are most like God in *power,* in the right of free choice. We are most like Him in *character* when we use our power as He uses His; when we choose what He

[1] Psalm xviii. 44; lxvi. 3; lxxxi. 15; note marginal readings.

[2] Matthew xiii. 47-50. [3] Matthew xiii. 24-30, 36-43.

chooses for us. And so there must be a final time of sifting and choosing.

Here is the strength of love, that dares loose Satan out that so we must choose in the face of opposition. For faith isn't faith except it can stand the fire test, the friction fire test of opposition. Here is the tenderness of love, that longs to have a return love as pure and free as its own, and so gives fullest opportunity for it to be revealed and to grow.

So Satan is loosed out for his tempting work. And another great world crisis comes, and another great settlement; this the final one. The devil, his beastly Antichrist and false prophet, are put out of the way forever.

A great dazzling throne is set. And One sits on it with a face of indescribable glory. Then comes the second resurrection, of all those not included in the first resurrection a thousand years before. This is a judgment of *all who have died,* with the exception already noted. The judgment of the living spoken of in Matthew, twenty-five, probably is in connection with the closing scene of the great crisis, just before this judgment of the resurrected dead, or possibly in connection with this judgment. This is the final judgment.

Gladness and distress mingle in reading the account: gladness that the contest, age long, is over; distress to find that for some there is what is described briefly but with terrible intensity, in the words, "the lake of fire." Yet there is still comfort in noting the language used of

these,—"*if any.*"[1] It is not the language of a great multitude, but rather of an incorrigible scattered and scant minority.

Home at Last.

And now for the seventh time in this last vision John says, "I saw." Bit by bit the view opens up before his eyes, from the coming of the Lord Jesus out of the opened heavens, on and on, until now the final view of all bursts in a winsome glory before his astonished, delighted eyes.

God's own ideal, that He has been carrying in His heart, is pictured. That ideal is that He and man shall dwell together as a family. The ideal is not a Church nor a Kingdom. These are merely great means to a greater end. The ideal is the family, all dwelling together in sweetest harmony and content, with a common board, and a common fireside in the twilight of the day, and all the sweet fellowship that these stand for.

John sees a new heaven and a new earth, the old heaven and earth gone, and with them the separation of the wide sea gone forever, too. He sees the holy city, Jerusalem, made over new, coming down out of the new heavens to man's new dwelling-place, the new earth. It presents a wondrous, joyous appearance as of a bride adorned for her husband.

Then a great voice out of the throne speaks

[1] Revelation xx. 15.

of this ideal in the heart of God for Himself and His friend, man. "Look! God has pitched His tent down amongst men, and they shall be His peoples, and He will be their God." He will live with them as a Father-mother-God, personally caring for each one, Himself wiping away every tear from every eye. A single tear and a single pair of eyes will be enough to claim His personal attention at once.

His presence insures the absence forever of death, and mourning, and pain, and crying. The dirge music has sung its last song. The minor chords are gone. All the old things of a sorrowful sort are quite gone. And as John looks He that sitteth on the throne makes the glad announcement, "*Behold, I make all things new.*" And John is bidden to write all this, for "*these words are faithful and true.*"

And again the One on the throne seems to look eagerly forward to His ideal as already actually accomplished: "They are come to pass." And to let John feel the certainty of it all He says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end." The power that has done all from creation's morn will complete all clear to the end.

And then the tenderness of that highest love which finds expression in the personal touch comes out in the next words: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of life freely." The smallest need of any one will have His personal thought and attention, and they shall have the best there is, and have it in abundance.

And the old pleading that runs like a strain of music throughout these pages comes again: "He that *overcometh* shall inherit these things. I will be His God, and he shall be my son," and so entitled to the inheritance.

Then plainly, clearly, with all the honesty of love, comes the warning of the terrible outcome for those who refuse His tender love. It is most significant that this most winsome picture at the end of the book contains the dark, black shadows, which remain in the picture at the end.

All this is spoken directly to John by God Himself. It is not sent by an angel, or by a redeemed human messenger. It comes to John direct with all the force and tenderness of a word spoken to him out of the very heart of God.

And now an angel carries John off to let him see this that is called both a bride and a city. And from the top of a high mountain John looks out and sees a most wonderful city, coming down out of heaven from God, filled and flooded with the glory of God.

And the best language that earth knows anything about is used in the attempt to describe this city ideal. Its dimensions are perfect in proportion and in their outer relations. Its foundations are adorned with the costliest, most precious stones, the walls are built of jasper, and each gate is one immense pearl; but the city itself is builded of a gold as transparent as pure glass. Israel and the Church are as sweet memories of past days, recalled now by gates and foundations.

But these are passed by in noting the outshining glory of the presence of God. In the simple language which has become so imbedded in the heart and imagination of the Church, "the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine on it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." And the winsome description goes on. The nations walk in this wondrous light of God's presence, and the kings of earth bring glad tribute of their glory into it. "And the gates thereof shall in no wise be shut by day, for there shall be no night there." "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that doeth an abomination and a lie, but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life."

In the midst of the city is a river of water of life clear as sparkling crystal, flowing out from the throne of God and of the Lamb. On each side of the river is the tree of life yielding continual fruitage. And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

And the heart never fails to respond with a quickened beat to the lines: "His servants shall serve Him; and *they shall see His face;* and His name shall be in their foreheads;"—that is, His character shall shine out of their faces. "And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light. And they shall reign forever and ever."

Such is the heart-touching, heart-gripping tale of God's ideal for man, His creature and com-

panion and friend. All the best that the city stands for of human life, and all the best that the country, typified in the garden, stands for, are forever blessedly joined. And in the midst—*Himself,* and gathered about Him His redeemed ones, as children about a father, in a union and fellowship cemented by the heart's blood of God, never more to be put asunder.

The Master's Last Words.

And John closes the book with a few personal paragraphs. The vision is complete. Now come the closing words. For the third time John is solemnly assured, "these words are faithful and true." And again comes the voice as of some One always standing by as John is being shown, "Behold, I come quickly." And again the words with which the book begins come to seal all its impressions,—blessed is he that reads, and prayerfully seeks to understand the simple message, and who sets himself to live his life in the light of this simple tremendous message.

And John is significantly told *not* to *seal up* the message. Daniel had been told to seal up the message given him, for it would not come to pass until the latter days after great intervening events had taken place.[1] But there are no intervening events before this message is to come true. It has been possible for the fulfilment to come in any generation since John saw and wrote. It is yet more possible, growing distinctly toward the

[1] Daniel xii. 4, 9.

probable, that these things shall come in our generation. The words remain open, waiting an expectant fulfilment. They are not to be sealed up but openly proclaimed, for the time when it is possible for these things to work out is at hand. This is a present practical issue.

And meanwhile, during these days of the waiting time each one who reads or listens, however reluctantly, to the message, will follow the bent of his own deliberate choice, but with ever increasing intensity. The pure will become more pure; the bad yet worse. There's no standing still as we listen.

And again come the solemnly repeated words: "Behold, I come quickly." His coming is the next step in the great plan. There were then, and there are now, no great intervening events to be worked out, and waited for. His coming is imminent. It is a thing to be expected. And He brings with Him the wages due each one.

And like the signature of certification at the book's beginning,[1] comes now the personal signature at its close: "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." So He personally certifies to us the absolute accuracy and reliability of this message.

And with the signature come again the gracious pleading and warning intermingled. Any one who will may wash his robes in the fountain provided, and may eat of the life-giving

[1] Revelation i. 8.

tree, and come unto the God-lit city. And equally clear it is that any who insist on doing so may remain outside unwashed. Each one is free to do as he wills.

And once again comes the emphatic, solemn announcement of the accuracy and dependability of this message of John's Revelation: "*I, Jesus,* have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things for the Churches." It is distinctively a Church message, and comes with all the direct authority of our Lord Jesus Himself. And He patiently reminds us of His authority,—I am both root and offspring of David, both before him and after him. I am the bright, the morning star, that rises while it is yet night and brings in the new day.

And again the spirit of winsome pleading breaks out to those unwashed ones who insist on staying outside the gate. Both the Spirit and the whole company of washed ones say "come." And let him that heareth that sweet word pass it out to those farther away until the last man hears and feels. And let them know that anybody at all who is thirsty may come freely and drink of the river of the water of life.

And yet once again comes the peculiar certifying of the contents of this Revelation message, and a solemn warning against any interfering with its meaning. Jesus says,—I hereby certify unto every man that hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if any man add to them, making them mean something else than I intend, God shall add unto him the plagues that

are written in this book: and if any man shall take away, or lessen the meaning, God shall take away his part from the tree of life and out of the holy city. It comes as a very solemn warning.

And yet once more comes the emphatic assurance both of the reliability of the book itself, and of the certainty of its great central message, —"He who testifieth these things saith, '*yea, I come quickly.*'"

And John fervently adds, "Amen; come, Lord Jesus." And so says every heart in tune with His heart who is coming.

VIII.—WATCHING THE HORIZON

"Thy Kingdom Come."

"Thou art coming! We are waiting
With a hope that cannot fail;
Asking not the day or hour,
Resting on Thy word of power,
Anchored safe within the veil.
Time appointed may be long,
But the vision must be sure:
Certainty shall make us strong,
Joyful patience must endure.

"O the joy to see Thee reigning,
Thee, my own belovèd Lord!
Every tongue Thy name confessing,
Worship, honour, glory, blessing,
Brought to Thee with glad accord!
Thee, my Master and my Friend,
Vindicated and enthroned!
Unto earth's remotest end
Glorified, adored, and owned."

—Frances Ridley Havergal.

WATCHING THE HORIZON

The Thrill of Expectancy.

Watching reveals character and makes it. It means wakefulness, an ideal, a purpose, and a hopeful expectancy. Some people only look. Their eyelids are not shut. Something passes before the eye. They look, but they rarely see.

It takes a soul to see. It needs a spirit awake to see out through the eye, and see into persons and events passing by, and see forward to what is coming to-morrow. Some sleep. The body is awake in daytime. They walk and talk and eat, buy and sell, count money and hoard it. But their eyes are never lifted to the outer horizon. They are settled in an even, contented round. Their spirits sleep.

A wakefulness of spirit to the time and its need, an ideal clear and high of what should be, a purpose strong and masterful that holds the life up toward the ideal, an expectancy eager, brave, steady; an eye fixed intently on some One unseen,—this is what watching means. It reveals character. It makes character. It reaches out strong spirit hands, and brings nearer and sooner the thing watched for.

Watching has always been a characteristic of the men God has used. He used them because

He could. They were of use. Their spirit made them serviceable. Their watching opened the way for fellowship of spirit and partnership in action. It put them in tune with Him who never slumbers nor sleeps, and who watches over His pledged word, to bring it to pass at the earliest possible hour.

The watcher sings. His favourite song is "I will lift up mine eyes." He sees what is coming. He sees *Him* who sits beyond the horizon of our common outlook. And seeing Him grows this sort of expectancy, and the expectancy becomes the controlling thing.

It was this sort of expectancy that made Abraham a pilgrim at seventy-five, and that grew deep the pilgrim trait of patient endurance through the weary twilight years till the promised heir came, and even beyond that, wove the finest texture into his character when the severest test came.

It was this expectancy that drew Moses away from the court life of Egypt, and the possible prospect of wearing imperial purple, to become the leader of a straggling crowd of slaves. And it held him steady on through long years, wilderness travel, criticism, and non-appreciation, on and on, till Nebo's top was climbed. He endured as seeing Him who was invisible to the unseeing eyes of the crowds at His side.

Such expectancy has steadied every leader for God, in these old pages from first to last, young Joseph in the dungeon, Joshua in the glare of the limelight, into which he was suddenly thrust,

and ruddy-faced singing David fleeing and hiding for his life from the javelin of Saul. It was the clear-seeing eye of Isaiah and Jeremiah in the homeland, and of Ezekiel and Daniel among the weeping exiles, that kept the heart of the nation warm with the vision of what was surely coming. The thrill of expectancy runs through the pages of this old Hebrew classic. Its light is never out of the eye, nor its alluring out of earshot.

When Jesus walked among men expectation ran high. When He was killed the gloom of the three days was the gloom of a bright light suddenly put out. The darkness was intensified by the light that had been shining. Then there came a new sort of expectancy, higher, finer, of the inner spirit. This Jesus was coming back, in all the glory of the old prophetic vision, made realer by the personal touch these men knew, and this new expectancy puts all the paper of the New Testament a-tremble with delight. It is the light that lighteth every page and epistle, every contested path of witness, and every hour of suffering because of faith.

The Church of these New Testament pages is *a watching Church.* The expectancy of the Lord Jesus' return is the north star of their sky. It never swerves. All the rest revolves around it. They see everything else in relation to this. Their going into all the world and preaching to every creature was not simply for men's conversion: that surely: but beyond that, it was to bring the Christ back for the next step in His

world programme. He would come and set up His kingdom, and then through the kingdom would come a yet wider, farther-reaching world evangelizing.[1] This expectancy controlled their life and activity. Through their faithful world witnessing He would come.

And as the knot is put on the end of the thread of revelation the very knotted thread seems aglow with the glory of what is coming. The Bible from end to end is a-thrill with expectancy, a hopeful watching for something, aye, *for some One.*

A Calendar of Events.

We have been looking a bit closely at this knot in the end, the threads composing it. Now we want to gather up all that we have been going over with the light that comes from the other pages, so as to have some sort of a simple, clear grasp of the truth. This will help our eyesight. We can watch the horizon better. Our eyes will be steadier in the glare of the lower lights, and sharper to see in the spells of darkness that get thicker now and then.

It is interesting to notice that this book of the Revelation is a calendar book. That is to say, it is not a calendar of dates but of events. It gives coming events in the order in which they will occur. Its table of contents becomes an outline of coming events. There is the Man of Fire standing among the candlesticks. Then

[1] Acts iii. 20-21; xv. 14-18.

comes an hour when He advances to the next step in His programme. Then, step by step, there follow the occurrences until the kingdom is actually here. And then the after events, when the kingdom's work is done.

It turns out that this thing of our Lord's return cuts a wider swath than we are apt to think, if we don't stop to think. That is because of *Who it is* that is coming. An event takes on the size of the chief person concerned. This Lord Jesus is the One through whom our world was made in the early time, when there were no calendars. So His coming naturally concerns the whole world. It concerns the system of evil in which the world is entangled, and the evil spirit world so closely interlocked with our own.

Then our Lord Jesus came amongst us as a man. He came as a Jewish man, and to the Jewish nation. So His coming concerns the Jew and the Jewish capital, Jerusalem. When He sent down His executive, the Holy Spirit, a new organization was formed, the Church. So His coming concerns the Church, and concerns it very intimately, for it is spoken of as a body of which He is the head. When Jesus came it was to die for a world and to redeem a world. And so His coming concerns the future plans of the earth and the race.

Yet though His coming has such a broad sweep, it is quite possible to get a grasp of the few essential items in the programme. And this will make our footing steadier, our vision clearer,

our praying more confident, and our soul-winning and witnessing warmer and truer. We turn now to try to get this simple, helpful understanding.

The present is the time of the candlesticks. The Man of Fire is in our midst unperceived. The unseen Eyes of Flame see. Our Lord Jesus still waits, and depends on the faithfulness of His Church. The light is still shining out. The dark places are getting some light. The light has not yet wholly failed to get out through the human lantern to the crowd in the dark.

The characteristics of this waiting time, so long prolonged, are plainly put. In the outer world there will be an increasing lawlessness and disregard of every sort of restraint, and an increasing power of organization and centralization. There will be an increasing getting together for more effective action.

In the Church world there will be an increasing formalism, a compromise with evil and with the world spirit. There will be a decrease of warm personal devotion to the Lord Jesus as the controlling motive power. And there will be a growing inclination to make light of, or ignore, or jeer at, the idea of the Lord Jesus' return.

As this period wears on toward its close, and so on toward the events to follow, there will be a coming together of the Jews scattered throughout the world in an attempt to regain Palestine and reconstitute the Hebrew nation there with its temple and old sacrificial ritual. These

are the three chief tendencies that will characterize the present waiting time preceding the group of coming events.

The decisive index-finger, that this present period is actually coming to its close, will be this movement among the Jews. The movement to regain control of Palestine may rise and fall back, gain and lose again. But some day it will come to its head. By some arrangement with the nations concerned the Jewish nation will actually be set up again in Palestine, and the building of the temple in Jerusalem begun. This will be the decisive indication. This is an unfailing index-finger. The hands of the clock are moving then toward the striking of the hour. Soon the sands will be run out and the hour-glass turned.

The Beginning of the End.

At some time soon after that point is reached *two unseen events will occur,* that is, unseen on earth. Roughly, it will be three and a half years after, though the whole tendency of the Scripture is to discourage the figuring of *exact* time. Yet information is given that the outlook may be intelligent. These events are unseen on the earth. They take place in heaven.

The Holy Spirit will be withdrawn from the Church. He will not be withdrawn from individuals. He abode in men before the Church was formed, and will after the Church has cast Him out. He is withdrawn only because He has been practically and wholly cast out.

The Lord Jesus, who sent Him down to form the Church and witness through it, will withdraw Him from the Church. The candlestick has moved out of all touch with the light. And now the light is withdrawn, and so the candlestick moved out of its place as the light-bearer. This is probably the advance step taken by our Lord Jesus that marks the beginning of the end.

At the same time there occurs a conflict of spirit forces up in the heavens. While the earth seems to be Satan's chief place of activity, yet his headquarters are up in the heavens, that is, somewhere below the throne of God and above the earth. This conflict is against him and his spirit forces. It is led by Michael, the archangel. It results in Satan and his host being cast out of the heavens and down to the earth.

It is significant that as the Holy Spirit goes up, this conflict follows, and Satan is cast out and down. Is it the Holy Spirit's return there that precipitates this conflict, and defeat for Satan? It would seem not improbable. So the moral situation on the earth is intensified doubly. The blessed Holy Spirit, with all His power of restraint over evil, is withdrawn. The evil spirit, with all his power of intensifying evil, is cast down in person to the earth. These are the two unseen events marking the advance move of the end time.

There will be nothing on earth *at the moment* to indicate that these tremendous events have happened. There is no suggestion of how much time is involved. Time is a matter of earth's

calculation. Quite possibly *we* would speak of these events as occurring in a very brief time, perhaps an instant of our reckoning. These are the two events unseen on the earth.

At the same time there will begin *two events seen taking place on earth.* The first is the coming to the front of a man, a terrible leader of the forces of unrighteousness. Paul speaks of him as "the Lawless One." John's name for him is "the Antichrist." He becomes the human representative or incarnation of Satan. As Satan is cast down out of the heavens this leader comes to the front on earth.

He seems to have official position at the head of some great coalition of nations, with a wide area of authority. He seems to be some former notable leader known in history, who died, but is now brought back to life again by Satan's supernatural power.

As he forges to the front there follows on earth a horrible time of war, famine, pestilence, death, and persecution. He arbitrarily breaks the agreement with the Jews under which they have re-established their nation, and begins a terrible persecution of them. He sets up in the temple a blasphemous image, and requires that all people shall worship it. This strikes not only at the Jew, but at the Christian as well.

At one stroke of genius he compels absolutely universal attention to his command by forbidding the doing of any business except by those willing to worship the image. Those refusing the worship are killed. He will have an assistant doing

wonderful miracles by Santanic power to deceive and persuade the people. During this time there is a loosing out on the earth of countless hordes of unseen demons to torment men.

All this continues for three and a half years. The time is stated in three different ways to make quite clear just how long is meant. This is the first of the two seen events. It centres at Jerusalem and seems to reach out practically to all the earth.

The second event is significant. During all this terrible time of persecution and blasphemy and the riot of evil, there will be two men in Jerusalem preaching the Gospel of the Lord Jesus, and calling on men to repent. As an emphasis of their witness against the awful wickedness current they will be clothed in mourning. They will have miraculous power to attest their witness, and to protect themselves against attacks upon their lives. The great crowds of many nationalities in Jerusalem will make their witness practically world-wide in its direct as well as its indirect influence.

This also continues for three and a half years. As the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from the Church as the witness of the Lord Jesus, these two special witnesses appear. In His great faithfulness and patience God never leaves Himself without a witness. This is the second event seen on earth. These two, evil at its worst, and God's special witnesses, run along side by side, both centring in Jerusalem.

The Climax—He Comes.

Then there comes *a group of four events.* And these four are very closely associated together in point of time. They occur at the close of the period of persecution and wickedness. Indeed, it is their occurrence that brings the close. Yet the exact time when they happen is left quite uncertain.

And this clearly is another bit of the tendency in the record to keep our thought on the main events, and not on figuring out time. We are to keep to the essentials and be wary of mere speculation. For the sake of clearness I am putting these four events separately, but this does not mean that some of them may not be occurring at the same moment, or that all may not come within a very brief time. We simply do not know. It looks as though we are not meant to know.

There is *a Jew event.* The Holy Spirit comes down upon the nation of Jews in simple, tremendous, converting power. This is put in connection with the coming down out of the heavens on a cloud of the Lord Jesus. It seems to be this sight of their great Kinsman, Jesus, whom they crucified, that is used by the Holy Spirit to strike penitence to their stubborn hearts. Literally a nation is born again in a day. It will be with the whole nation as it was with Saul on the Damascus road, as sudden and unexpected, as startling and as radical; as sudden and unexpected an appearance of Jesus, as startling

to the Jews, as radical in the absolute spirit transformation.

There is *a Church event.* And here the word Church is used to describe all believers in the Lord Jesus. That will be a much sifted and chastened company of people. This event is also connected with the open, visible coming of the Lord Jesus, out of the upper blue, before all eyes. It affects two separate companies of believers. The bodies of all believers who have died will be raised out of their graves, inhabited again by those who lived in them. Then the living believers shall have a transforming touch upon their bodies. And the two companies shall be caught up into the air into the presence of the Lord Jesus.

As they come into His presence there will be a purifying and perfecting of character, and an adjustment of relations with Him. There is no suggestion of how much time is involved. We naturally think of things as taking place through so much time. Our limitations in this regard will be gone then. It may be what we now call instantaneous.

There is *a world event.* There will come to the earth and to men a visitation of terrible judgments, affecting men's bodies, the sea and rivers, vegetation, an intensifying of the sun's heat, and possibly a terrible darkness—in short, affecting everything concerning man and life on the earth. There will be a great gathering of the armies of the nations at a place in Palestine. Again there is no suggestion of how much time this visita-

tion of judgments runs through, nor this gathering for battle.

Then there is *the* event, *the great climax event*, the actual coming of the Lord Jesus, out of the heavens, down to the earth. At the moment when He comes the Jews will be in the midst of a terrible siege in Jerusalem. Against the city will be assembled the armies of the nations. The city will be taken, the looting and ravaging already begun.

Then suddenly, out of the blue above, the Lord Jesus comes in a great blaze of blinding light, accompanied by great numbers. He will come to Olivet. With the coming will be a terrible earthquake, such as the earth has never known.

It is a striking geological fact that the greatest "fault," or break in the earth's surface, is found in Palestine, running north and south from Antioch on the Orontes down even into Africa. But this earthquake will affect very wide areas, including the city of Babylon, which will be shaken to utter destruction. That earthquake will make radical changes in the formation of the earth's surface in Palestine.

At the same time there will be an equally terrific shake-up in the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars. The effect of both these upon the vast panic-stricken multitudes will be most pitiable. They will call upon the upheaved rocks to hide them from the wrath of God.

These are the four events occurring at this time. They are grouped together. It seems im-

possible to say first this, then that. They are grouped. The great essential thing standing out is that our Lord Jesus' coming will be at a terrible climax of evil. There will be partial judgment visited on the earth. The system of evil will be wholly overthrown. The Jews will be converted as a nation by the Holy Spirit. The Church will be caught away out of the distress, and will have part with our Lord Jesus in His coming.

It should again be noticed that in all this there are no time notes, except as to the length of this tribulation time. The persecution of the Jew and desecration of Jerusalem, the time of the two witnesses, and the sway of the Antichrist, each runs through three and a half years. There are no time notes whatever for the present waiting-time. And though the length of the tribulation itself is stated, yet it should be noted that the exact time of the Lord Jesus' actual return still remains quite undetermined.

In Daniel's prophecy there are four events spoken of as occurring at this time, and each is measured from the time when the sacrifices are stopped and the chief desecrating act in the temple begins. The tribulation runs for three and a half years. Thirty days later comes some glad event not specified further. Seventy-five days later there comes another glad event, and two years ten months and twenty days later the complete cleansing of the temple. Each of these portions of time is measured from the same starting point. This would suggest a period of

readjustment after the Antichrist is slain, running through almost three years. All these time notes are of a year of three hundred and sixty days, not our common calendar year of three hundred and sixty-five and a fraction days.

There comes the period called the kingdom. Its capital is Jerusalem. The regenerated nation of Israel becomes the first nation of the earth, with all other nations tributary. Israel's leadership is a blessed one in its spiritual influence over all others. The Jews are a missionary nation, whose one passion is to make the knowledge of God known throughout the earth.

The redeemed ones of all the earth through all times will reign *over* the earth in fellowship with the King, the Lord Jesus. In their resurrection bodies, with all present bodily restrictions and limitations gone, they will have a blessed share in the new earth ministry.

The purpose of the kingdom is world-wide evangelization, but with all the conditions radically changed. Satan, with all evil spirits, is removed from the scene of action. The nation of Jews, baptized by the Holy Spirit, is the missionary force, under the direction and help of the Church. The Holy Spirit will have been poured out upon all flesh, making all peculiarly open to the truth.

What a wonderful time of continual revival it will be! But that much abused word "revival" will have its sweet, original meaning restored. It will mean a re-living, a new life of the Spirit

coming, that will naturally include the body, too.

Intelligent Watching.

Such are the events, near and far, which some day will come up over the horizon of our common life, ushering in a new day. And we are bidden by our Lord Jesus to *watch*. We watch for Him, and for anything that tells us His coming is nearing.

Watching means wakefulness, an ideal, a purpose, an expectancy, and a daily life under the control of wakefulness, ideal, purpose, and expectancy. That our Lord Jesus will actually come to this old earth and reign, this is the ideal. That we shall, by grace, be true to Him in everything, day by day, during this waiting-time, this is the purpose. That *we* shall indeed see Him come, and be caught up into His presence without death, this is the expectancy.

That this shall all be a real thing to us, *controlling* all our relationships, our gold, and our life, and that we shall reverently, thoughtfully seek to understand what He has told us about it, this is the wakefulness. This is what watching means. Our bodies may be asleep, our brains and hands absorbed in the day's task, but our hearts can be awake for the sound ahead of the coming of His feet.

"But how can you watch for Him if there are intervening events?" So the question came to me this summer by a thoughtful, godly min-

ister who looks for His coming. And I said: "Because His coming is one of a little group of events which cluster about His coming."

The crowd stands watching at the railway station in England to see the king's train come in. Yet they know that before it comes the pilot-engine will come, running ahead about so many minutes to insure the safety of the way. The coming of the pilot-engine heightens the intensity of watching, for now soon the king will come.

The watcher in the sick-chamber, weary with the long night's anxious vigil, goes to the east window to see if day is coming. There comes a bare lighting-up in the east, just a slight lessening of the darkness that is everywhere. But even this much brings a sigh of relief. The sun itself may not be seen for two hours or more. But you know without looking at the clock that the sun is coming and is near. Its presence near sends the light far ahead.

When the trees begin to send out swelling bud and tender green leaf and catkin, we know summer is coming, even though the chill is in the air, and the night may even now bring a touch of the white of frost. "Even so ye also *when ye see these things* know that *He* is nigh, even at the doors."[1]

There's something intensely practical about this thing of watching. I mean the intelligent watching that a thoughtful study of God's Word promotes. There is a striking sentence used in

[1] Matthew xxiv. 33.

describing some of the men that rallied to David during the clearing-up storm that preceded his reign. It is said of certain of the tribe of Issachar that they "*had understanding of the times* to know what Israel ought to do" in the matter of making David the accepted king over the realm.[1] Their thoughtful study and judgment of the time made them wise leaders of action.

There is a similar significant word spoken to Daniel in the final vision in which these end events are being disclosed. And we recall that the speaker is He for whose coming we look. He says, "They that are *wise* shall *understand*."[2] Daniel had prayerfully set himself to understand God's will for his people.[3] When the wonderful vision was given him in answer to his patient study and continued prayer, the Man of Fire who came to him said, "Now I am come to make thee *understand*."

It is wise, by thoughtful, prayerful study of God's Word, to try to understand what He has told us. Not to do so is not wise. And more, it will become increasingly needful that others be taught as these events draw on. Daniel is told in this same connection that "They that are wise shall instruct many."[4]

The opening words of the Revelation, and especially the closing paragraphs, emphasize this same thing. The revelation is given that we

[1] I Chronicles xii. 32. [2] Daniel xii. 10.
[3] Daniel viii. 15-17; ix. 1-2; x. 1-3, 11-14.
[4] Daniel xi. 33.

may read and understand and hold our lives true to this vision. This thing is intensely practical. Indeed, it is *the* practical thing for our day. We *can* understand the simple essentials revealed here. Our Lord Jesus earnestly desires us to do so. Surely we will, for His sake.

A Spirit Sensitiveness.

The thoughtful watching that grows out of an understanding of our Lord's plans influences subtly and mightily one's whole life. It deepens wondering reverence for the Lord Jesus Himself, His present power and personal glory sitting up yonder in the indescribable glory of the Father's presence, and His patience and strength in this waiting-time. It draws out a depth and tenderness of personal love for Himself and of devotion to Him.

There comes to be a keenly acute conscience about evil, and about compromise with evil; and yet with it a sanity of judgment on particular questions arising, and a gentle consideration for others who see otherwise, or think they do. Evil grows in subtlety and in aggressiveness in our day, and probably will yet more. It seeks especially to make inroads among God's professing people. Yet evil is evil. Its true inwardness is quickly revealed by adding a "d" at the beginning of the word. And it grows increasingly repugnant in whatever guise, as we come to study more its inner spirit as revealed in these disclosures of the end times.

Then, too, this watching affects one's judgment of, and attitude toward, Christian service, and toward movements in the Christian world. The getting-together spirit is getting more and more into Church circles. The fervent heart repeats constantly our Lord's prayer, "that they may all be one." Yet it becomes clear that there may be movements toward union that are not of the Holy Spirit's initiation, and that cannot have his approval.

It is not enough to do good. That may prove to be a low level of action. *The* thing is to find out what God has planned, and fit into that, with all the warmth of one's being. His will is always good, and better, and best. The good thing may not be the thing He has planned and wants done.

It becomes increasingly clear that our Lord Jesus is a great general. He has the whole campaign of action mapped out, and every detail of it thought into and thought out. As one comes to learn more of His plans, and Himself as a planner, there comes to be *a passion for doing His will.* One moves from the old position of working for God up to the position of so fitting in that *God works through us.*

And there comes to be a consciousness that He is doing immensely more through the things we do than we are conscious of. So in all Church activity there comes to be a reaching out in spirit to discern what *He* wants done, and putting all the strength into that.

Then, too, one's thought of foreign missionary

service undergoes a change. The actual taking of the message of Christ to those who haven't heard comes to have first place. Educational work and medical and humanitarian, and the like, in missionary service, are seen to be wisely used when held strictly in place as a means to a direct end. And their value is judged wholly by their being a means of bringing those whom they touch face to face with the Christ that died.

It seems to be possible to spend fifty years and more establishing mission work in the city centres of a foreign-mission country, and all good, blessed work; and yet have the great mass of that country's population in utter ignorance of the Gospel message and its power.

As the Holy Spirit is allowed control increasingly, there comes to be a better understanding of God's purposes and of His plans, an earnest coöperation in the Church movement for making Christ known to all men everywhere, a faithfulness in all the circle of one's own home Church, and a warm personal winning of men to know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour.

So it is seen that watching for our Lord's return affects one's whole life in an intensely practical way. It deepens faith in *Him*. It leads to an *intelligent detachment* in social and commercial and even Church circles, while making an increase of thoughtful regard for others. It purifies the personal life. It chastens and deepens and gentles the personal character.

It seems very striking and very strange that

when Jesus was born there are just two persons named, outside the immediate circle, who seemed to have the spirit instinct that recognized who He was. There was a man living in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon. Who was he? rich? poor? cultured? of lowly station? No one knows. But whoever he was, he had cultivated close walk with God. That's clear. And into his inner spirit came the conviction that the Christ promised for ages, so long waited for, the Christ was now coming, and *he would see Him.*

And a similar story is told of the woman called Anna. These two were in that simple touch of heart with God that could in spirit sense the coming of the Christ. There may have been others. We are not told. But the emphasis remains on the fact that few seemed to discern the working out of God's tremendous plan.

Will it be so again? It would surely seem that intelligent watching would make one sensitive in spirit to coming events. Yet there would ever be a mingling of deepest reverence, and a thoughtful caution regarding mere speculation, while the fervent prayer that Jesus taught is daily repeated, "Thy kingdom come."

And John's closing Revelation prayer constantly breathes out, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

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